

AS I WAS SAYING

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

ON BECOMING AN AMERICAN: *Some Meditations of a
Newly Naturalized Immigrant.*

SOME OUTLINES OF THE RELIGION OF EXPERIENCE.

OUR FELLOW SHAKESPEARE: *How Everyman may
Enjoy his Works.*

CRITICISMS OF LIFE: *Studies in Faith, Hope, and
Despair.*

AS I WAS SAYING

*A Sheaf of
Essays and Discourses*

BY
HORACE JAMES BRIDGES
AUTHOR OF "ON BECOMING AN AMERICAN," ETC.



BOSTON
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
MCMXXIII

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THE PLIMPTON PRESS • NORWOOD • MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO ARTHUR LITTLE HAMILTON, *Esq.*

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

It is recorded that when the great Newman tried to dedicate a book to a friend, in recognition of "a long, equable and sunny friendship," the inspired compositor rendered it into "a long squabble and funny friendship." I salute the sub-conscious wisdom of that printer chap. Friendship ought to be both sunny and funny, both equable and interlarded with squabbles. Heaven knows ours has been; and this letter is to be a monument to both its aspects, since I value both equally.

You have so long acted as my literary mentor (and sometimes, despite the unfailing kindness of your criticism, as my literary tormentor) that it seems consonant with the natural order of things for me to thrust upon you, as far as I can, the responsibility for the appearance in collected form of the ensuing Essays. That responsibility, I know, is rather a dreadful one, and I can imagine you shuddering to see your name here. But your shoulders are broad, and at worst you have a way of escape not open to myself. Whenever anybody points out anything I have said that I ought not to have said, or anything omitted that demanded saying, you can reply, "Yes, I urged him to strike this out," or "I strongly advised him to insert that"; and at once your skirts will

be cleared. It will be evident that Short Bridges is the culprit, not Codlin Hamilton; and the offending passage (or omission) will be taken as one more sign of the incurable obstinacy, or the unteachable stupidity, of your irresponsible protégé.

There is one trouble in which this book will certainly involve us both. It contains an Essay on "The Tyranny of Books," the gist of which is that there are already so many books in the world that nobody can possibly master enough of them. To the obvious question, "Then why the dickens do you inflict another upon us?" we two can make no answer. Whatever my secret self-flatteries may be, I dare not, in these days of Freudianism, announce publicly that I think the things I have said so well worth pondering that people will be well advised to read me at the cost of neglecting other authors. Neither can I, with any conscience, expect you to say this for me.

I should scarcely have ventured to run, with my eyes open, into this dilemma, were it not that better men than I have faced it in the past, and somehow survived despite their temerity, or been forgiven for it. Doubtless an omnivorous and ubiquitous reader like yourself has encountered and devoured the venerable duodecimo of Joseph Glanvill, Artium Magister, on "The Vanity of Dogmatizing." I think you must have read this, because the subject is so congenial with your tastes and temperament, and also because it was out of this rarity (printed in 1661 "by *E. C.* for *Henry Eversden* at the *Grey-Hound* in *St. Paul's-Church-Yard*") that dear Matthew Arnold extracted the story he elaborated into "The Scholar-Gypsy."

(N.B. — I treasure a lovely copy of Glanvill's first edition, which formerly belonged to Elkin Mathews, and contains signed flyleaf notes in his handwriting. Don't let Edward Newton hear of this, or he'll be flying out here from Philadelphia, in which case he would doubtless "collect" my copy with his usual amenities.)

Well, the good Joseph seems to have written his Preface under an apprehension very like my present one. "To complain in *print*," he says, "of the multitude of *Books*, seems to me a self-accusing vanity, whilst the querulous Reprehenders add to the cause of complaint, and transgress themselves in that, which they seem to wish amended."

Yet Master Glanvill printed his book; so why shouldn't I print mine? How, indeed, is a man to complain of the multitude of books except in print? John Morley, when the collected edition of Carlyle was published, quietly chaffed Carlyle with a remark to the effect that "the great Gospel of Silence was at last complete in thirty handsome volumes." A palpable hit! Yet Carlyle was in the right: only in words can you preach up silence; and only in a book can I bemoan the tyranny of books.

Besides which, it may be counted to me for righteousness (or at least in mitigation of sentence) that this is only my fifth book in ten years. And, like the servant-girl's baby, it is a very little one. You, at least, who know what I am capable of, and what quarries of material are heaped up in my filing cabinets, will testify (I hope) that my moderation is almost as astonishing as that of Warren Hastings. I could easily furnish forth another twenty or thirty volumes if I were really relent-

less ("really industrious," I hear you murmur); yet this is only my fifth in a decade; and with the power of self-restraint I have acquired (mainly through your exhortations and dehortations) I am not likely to exceed this pace for the future. So please tell any guileless prospective purchasers of this volume that they need not fear lest their encouragement should lead me to repeat the offence next week or next month. I am no H. G. W——s, that I should turn out books faster than other men wear out socks.

In truth, as you know, I am not really a writer at all. My books have all been worried out of me by other people. Look at this one, for instance. Of its eleven chapters, six have already appeared in *The Standard*; and I summon David Hanchett, the vigorous and compulsive editor of that select periodical, to witness that he nagged me almost to death for every one of them. For this cruelty he now makes dubious amends by permitting me to reprint them here. Of the other five, one has for some time been extant in pamphlet form. That is the one on "Worry," which Lewis Penwell and Emil Schmied (Publication Chairman of the Chicago Ethical Society) compelled me, gun in hand, to write for them. For the paper on Butler the Chicago Literary Club was first responsible, and thereafter Dr. Lucy Waite, who extorted it from me for publication in her now defunct *Liberal Review*. The last two Essays in the book appear now for the first time, solely because hosts of people, who listened to the substance of them in lecture form, have made my life miserable by their constant demands for them in print. They probably thought they would get them in twenty-cent pamphlets. I don't know what Marshall Jones is going to

make them pay for this book; but the excess over twenty cents, whatever it is, will represent my revenge for their badgering: whereat, like Stalky & Co., I gloat.

I hope that, on reading these pages, you will be convinced that I am at least an enjoyer of good books, though I cannot write a good one myself. (No, don't worry; no reviewer is going to read far enough to quote this against me. Reviewers nowadays never have time to read anything more than the publisher prints on the "jacket" — that's what "jackets" are for — and Jones won't be fool enough to put this confession there.) With Butler and Mark Twain, with George Eliot and Tyrrell, and with my beloved old Sir Thomas Browne, I have had such a delectable and soul-satisfying time that I could not resist telling audiences about them; and from that to the appearance of my lucubrations here, under your aegis, was a process of sheer determinism.

Another matter that should be spoken of in a letter like this relates to the people I have ventured to criticize adversely. You have been so severe on my severity, so "vindictive" about my "vindictiveness," that, after all the toning down I could conscientiously do, I still hardly dare to let some of these pages see the light. Of course you are always right in principle (that's why you are so jolly hard to get along with and live up to): but I really want to explain that some of the things which may sound severe were written with a twinkle in the eye, and were intended for humorous chaff. My English birth, no doubt, explains your inability to see any humour in my writing; one seldom sees what one doesn't expect, and an American no more expects humour from a Britisher than pearls from

a lobster. I wish I could get Jones to underscore the passages I meant in this way, or to print them in a special twinkly kind of ink. As he won't be bothered to do this, and as I can't very well put a footnote — "Goak" — to every passage of the sort, I must take my chance of being misunderstood. But I insist upon explaining that ten years of American life have partly supplied my congenital shortcoming. Readers thus warned may possibly imagine they detect occasional traces of a rudimentary sense of humour in my words.

Be that as it may, I want you to realize that adverse criticism from me is directed against ideas and teachings, never against persons. So far from feeling harshly towards those from whose opinions I dissent, I have the utmost reverence for them as spiritual beings; and am actually more conscious of indebtedness to them than to those with whom I agree. Every good soldier knows that his best friend is his bravest enemy, who keeps him alert and fit and on the *qui vive*; and I fully accept the noble doctrine of our great teacher, Felix Adler, that a man should especially love his intellectual enemies. They force him to think out and re-examine his own positions. Often they lead him to change his views: and this, whether he comes to agree with his opponents or not, is a benefit he cannot hope to receive from those with whom he sees eye to eye.

But I am tiring you with my prosy apologia. Pray forgive me. I have preached so much in my Essays that I mustn't preach any more here. The principles and the faith I live by are in these pages; not, I hope, offensively obtruded, but certainly there. And to me they seem so im-

portant and bracing, especially in these dejected and demoralized days, that I cannot apologize for setting them forth, even to you, who for over ten years have so constantly listened to me and encouraged and befriended me.

If this book were designed as a return for all your kindness, it would be ludicrously inadequate. But it is only an acknowledgment of an unpayable debt.

Believe me, my dear Arthur,

Yours ever sincerely,

HORACE J. BRIDGES

CHICAGO, *December 25, 1922*

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AS I WAS SAYING

“THESE people are under continual disquietudes, never enjoying a minute’s peace of mind; and their disturbances proceed from causes which very little affect the rest of mortals. Their apprehensions arise from several changes they dread in the celestial bodies. For instance, that the earth, by the continual approaches of the sun towards it, must in course of time be absorbed or swallowed up. That the face of the sun will, by degrees, be encrusted with its own effluvia, and give no more light to the world. That the earth very narrowly escaped a brush from the tail of the last comet, which would have infallibly reduced it to ashes; and that the next, which they have calculated for one and thirty years hence, will probably destroy us. . . . That the sun, daily spending its rays without any nutriment to supply them, will at last be wholly consumed and annihilated: which must be attended with the destruction of this earth, and of all the planets that receive their light from it.

“They are so perpetually alarmed with the apprehensions of these and the like impending dangers, that they can neither sleep quietly in their beds, nor have any relish for the common pleasures or amusements of life. When they meet an acquaintance in the morning, the first question is about the sun’s health, how he looked at his setting and rising, and what hopes they have to avoid the stroke of the approaching comet. This conversation they are apt to run into with the same temper that boys discover in delighting to hear terrible stories of sprites and hobgoblins, which they greedily listen to, and dare not go to bed for fear.”

— SWIFT’S “*Gulliver’s Travels*,” Pt. iii (1726).

AS I WAS SAYING

I

WORRY: ITS CAUSE AND CURE

(1919)

I. THE SELF AND ITS DISHARMONIES

ONE of the half mystical, half poetical fancies which date back to the first stirrings of scientific curiosity in ancient Greece is the idea of "a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." The purpose of the man who first threw out this notion may have been to suggest a conception of the infinity of the space in which the earth and the heavenly bodies are placed. If so, the effort is a failure. A positive definition of an infinite is a contradiction in terms; and this phrase is only a disguised negation. A centre that is everywhere is not a centre. A circumference that is nowhere is not a circumference.

But we may find it useful to appropriate this old fancy as a figurative description of the human self. Every man creates and lives in a universe of his own. Of that universe he is the centre, and its circumference is the limit of his will and his interests; which limit is always changing. There is an important truth in the doctrine so often reiterated in the poems of Walt Whitman, that the sum

of all past and present existence is gathered up in the individual self:

List close, my scholars dear!

*All doctrines, all politics and civilization exurge from you;
All sculpture and monuments, and anything inscribed
anywhere, are tallied in you;*

*The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records
reach is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same;
If you were not breathing and walking here, where would
they all be?*

*The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and
plays would be vacuums.*

*All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon
it;*

*(Did you think it was in the white or grey stone? or the
lines of the arches and cornices?)*

*All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded
by the instruments.¹*

Now, the difficulty we experience in regulating our life, and adjusting our inward condition and desires to outward circumstances and possibilities, is twofold. In the first place, my private universe, my will-world, is different from yours and will not dovetail with yours. We have not realized that there truly is in all of us a will fundamentally identical. Of certain common needs we are aware, but we often care far more intensely for our special personal objects than for the needs that are the same to all of us. Thus we find ourselves constantly at cross-purposes and seeking incompatible ends. We even

¹ "Carol of Occupations," in *Leaves of Grass*.

conceive success as purchasable only at the cost of others. My success must mean your failure: the condition of my obtaining what I want is that you must fail of effectuating your will. Little thought is needed to display the falsity of this standard. Every true seer has taught us that there is no real good for one which is not good for all. But, unhappily, we bury the teachings as well as the bodies of the prophets in the costly tombs we erect after stoning them; and we do not translate into action the knowledge they give us of what belongs to our peace.

The second half of the difficulty, however, is our more immediate concern. It consists in the fact that we find disharmony within ourselves, as well as in our relations with other people. Our nature is a muddled complex. "The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man," says Tennyson. Yes; and the Lord omitted to clear the brutes out before the soul entered upon possession of the house; with the result that in each of us there goes on a constant struggle between the central unity of the self and the pack of apes and tigers which present themselves as its empirical attributes, under the guise of instincts, emotions, sentiments, cravings and passions.

In plainer language, a human being is a bundle of propensities, each of which is excessive, or even limitless, in its demands; which demands are also incompatible with those of rival propensities, as well as with reason and the moral sense. From the schoolboy's appetite for pie to Napoleon's craving for power, these volcanic energies function blindly, in a state of constant war with prudence, with possibility, with each other, and with the total interest of that "little kingdom," the soul or self of the man.

Thus is our life a warfare, not only outwardly but inwardly. Man's will is at strife with reason, which weakly seeks to discover and attain the true ends of the self. The emotions divide and subdivide the will, defying it to harmonize them or find a satisfaction for one that will not provoke revolt of others. Reason, which we know ought to be our guide, is commonly the feeblest fragment of our nature. Its ideal function is to subdue and direct all the rebellious attributes of our being under its own sovereignty and leadership; but in practice, nine times in ten, it is restricted to the slavish task of finding excuses for what our non-rational nature makes us want to do or to believe. Thus the man as a whole is like a volcano, or a pack of hounds, each tugging at the leash in a different direction.

II. MAN'S EXCLUSIVE PREROGATIVE: WORRY

Many attempts have been made to define the precise difference between man and the animals that we call lower. Great and obvious as the difference is, it is yet very difficult to find in man any one power or peculiarity of which no rudiment is discoverable in the sub-human world. It is well-nigh impossible to deny evidences of incipient reason and moral sense to dogs, elephants and the higher apes. In ants and bees we plainly see well-developed powers of foresight and of the marshalling of means to ends by co-ordinated effort; — powers which it seems idle to distinguish from the collective enterprises of men by labeling them "instinct." M. Bergson would have us drop the too flattering (if not ironical) expression

homo sapiens, and speak instead of *homo faber*. His feeling is that the wisdom or reason of man, such as it is, is no indisputable monopoly. Man is the tool-making and tool-using animal; the only animal that makes the tools it works with; hence the expression *homo faber*. But (apart from the obvious objection that the invention and making of tools is an exercise of reason) it may be doubted whether this is any more an *exclusive* monopoly of man than any of the other attributes which have been thought distinctive. To make it so, one would have to restrict rather arbitrarily the meaning of the word *tools*; besides begging (as against Samuel Butler and others) the question whether such living tools as the bird's beak and the elephant's trunk are not as truly designed as the carpenter's hammer and the burglar's jemmy.

In view of the failures to differentiate man by some obvious characteristic peculiarly his own, we are quite likely to make an absurd mistake by repeating the attempt. Let us take the risk, however, and venture the suggestion that worry and the power to worry are the proud attributes of man alone. Other animals are capable of fear and sorrow, of happiness, possibly of hope. But it would seem that their emotions extend only to concretely realized facts. The deer fears the hunter or the accustomed signs of the hunter's presence. The dog rejoices in his master's return after long absence, or mourns him dead. But the essence of worrying is the power to transcend actual facts, to construct by imagination a hypothetical and contingent situation, and to experience in anticipation the various pains and inconveniences which such a situation would produce if it were actualized.

This is a part of what Carlyle means in that wonderful passage of *Sartor Resartus* where he insists that "man's unhappiness comes of his greatness." Unendowed with the power which we use in worrying, we should indeed escape much unhappiness and be incapable of some of the gravest sorrows that darken our lives; but we should never have been men or created a civilization. It is the power which we, above all other creatures, possess to "look before and after and pine for what is not," which engenders worry. We see the past, not as it may be supposed to survive in the consciousness of animals and little children, — as a mere unconnected series of episodes registered in pleasant or painful sensations, — but as a causal series of events, due in large part to determinations of human will. The past is therefore, to our understanding, a field of responsibility, every event wherein, though unchangeable by man or God once it has happened, was contingent before it occurred and might have been other than it became. No man can help blaming himself for past ill deeds, or deeds innocently performed that produced ill consequences; nor can anyone help taking satisfaction in past good deeds, or deeds morally colourless that had a fortunate issue. This is done just as regularly by preachers of a determinism inconsistent with all praise and blame as by the extremest advocates of freedom.

Even so, too, present things that lie beyond our power of determining do not lie beyond our power of speculation. Animals and children are happily oblivious of everything outside the immediate range of the senses. Things unseen, unheard, unsmelled, untouched, untasted, are for them as though they were not. Your dog enjoys the fire

and the fragments of your breakfast; he cannot be disturbed by the news in the morning's paper of the fighting in the Balkans or the fall in Steel Common. Still less is he capable of imagining and suffering over the possible consequences of a war that has not broken out or a slump in prices that has not occurred.

III. SAVAGE AND CIVILIZED WORRYING

It is not possible to ascertain whether there is more worrying to-day per head of the population than in any former period of history. Dr. Caleb Williams Saleeby, the eminent journalist and authority on eugenics, once wrote a book (which I blush to confess I have not read) entitled, *Worry: The Disease of the Age*. Perhaps a reading of his book might inform me whether, in his judgment, Americans and Europeans of the twentieth century do more worrying than their ancestors of the seventeenth or the seventh. Without having recourse to so desperate an expedient, however, I should be inclined to justify his title, on the ground that, whether or not we worry more than our forefathers did, we have less excuse for worrying than they had. The suffering we inflict upon ourselves by worry is more gratuitous than theirs, more in the nature of an ascetic work of supererogation.

To be sure, we have made our world in many ways more complex than the world of our fathers. We have sought out many inventions, without taking the precaution to adjust our nature and capacities to the new conditions and to the multiplied demands upon our attention which these inventions have involved. Organisms

adapted to the pace of horses have somehow to accommodate themselves to the speed of express trains, motor-cars and aeroplanes. Minds capable of following the happenings of a world that reported its progress through written news carried leisurely in sailing ships and stage-coaches, have now to keep up with a wireless telegraphy that puts a girdle round about the earth in very much less than Puck's forty minutes. Our lucky ancestors could be "out" to callers and could defer as long as they liked the answering of their letters. It was obviously much less of a nerve-strain to carry on a correspondence when Boston was a week's distance from Philadelphia, than it is now, when the Post Office can scarcely detain a letter to Philadelphia more than fifteen hours after Boston has mailed it. Besides this, we have to endure the tyranny of the telephone, which has no manners and keeps no office hours. Until we have the sense to develop an etiquette that will confine the telephone to stated hours, or enable us to be "out" to it, we shall continue to be exiled from privacy and from the unhindered contemplation and concentration indispensable to close study and creative accomplishment.

Nevertheless, it is questionable whether these and our other new complications outweigh, or even equal, the frightful bugbears with which the life of our ancestors was ridden, but which we have escaped. The life of man, from its beginnings down to the rise of science, and indeed down to the present moment among the so-called primitive peoples, was a perpetual series of terrors. The handful of verified records which anthropology has been able to rake together shows the thousand powerful nightmares created by the emotions and the erratic reasoning

processes of savage man, which he gratuitously but inevitably added to the multitude of objective terrors surrounding his life; — terrors that science and civilization have rooted out from our life.

It is customary to speak of the horrors entailed upon man's life by ignorance and superstition as unreal; but this is a mistake. Those horrors were real, by virtue of the creative power of the mind itself, which is quite capable of giving an effective reality to terrors that have no external cause, no actual counterpart in the objective world. The belief that the wearing of a certain garment or the eating of a certain food would cause death, or that a curse or incantation pronounced according to certain rules would kill, was often strong enough to verify itself. This undoubtedly was the reality, the pragmatic truth, underlying taboo and witchcraft. Anthropology tells many a true story of men who died because they expected to, after unwittingly breaking a taboo. It was worth while for New Zealand chiefs to proclaim that whoever wore their clothes or ate their food would die. The superstitious belief was the cheapest and most efficient of policemen. As long as the belief was firmly held, the property of the chiefs was safe; and what could have been better evidence, to the unsophisticated mind, of the truth of the belief, and of there being an actual causal nexus between the violation of the taboo and the punishment, than the fact that men really did die when they had, all innocently and unwittingly, appropriated some of the tabooed property? If people believe (as whole tribes and nations have believed) that their enemies can kill them by making and burning images of them, or sticking the images full of

pins, the man who pines away and dies when he learns that his enemy is so practising upon him, affords what to the savage mind is a clear, scientific, experimental proof of the belief. The tale of Meleager illustrates a connection perfectly familiar and credible to primitive thought. Meleager's mother was told that her son's life would last only so long as the brand, which was in the fire when he was born, remained unconsumed. She snatched the brand from the flames and preserved it. After Meleager had grown to manhood, his mother, in a fit of madness, hurled the brand into the flames; and as it consumed, his life faded away and he died. The tales in the Old Testament of the merry antics performed by the ark of Yahweh when it got loose among the Philistines,¹ and of the man who fell dead after touching it,² may not be true; but it undoubtedly is true that at a certain stage of human evolution such tales are entirely credible, and are credible because the irrational beliefs themselves engender the effects attributed to the magical influence.

The force at work here is what we call suggestion, or self-hypnosis. The savage mind is subject to it in a degree that to us is scarcely conceivable. But we flatter ourselves if we think we are quite freed from it. Suggestion makes the fortune of half the advertisers and merchants and doctors, of the vast majority of politicians, and of a distressing percentage of religions and their propagandists. We smile pityingly over the records of early man; but we cannot afford to forget the important truth proclaimed by a certain philosopher, that "there is a great

¹ I Sam. v. and vi. ² II Sam. vi. 6-7.

deal of human nature in all mankind." Which of us could quite serenely go on using a razor or a table-knife if we were convinced (truly or falsely) that a murder had been committed with it? Not I, for one.

Many of us look down upon what we consider the superstition of relic-worship. The peasant who is overawed by an alleged bit of the true cross, or by the blood of St. Januarius, or that monstrous fabrication about the Holy House of Loretto, seems to us to live in a different world from ourselves. Yet the only real difference between us and him is in regard to our historical sense. We are somewhat more fastidious than he on the subject of evidence. We cannot swallow our myths raw, as he can. They must be carefully pasteurized, and certified by the pontiffs of science, before we can get them down. The instinct or sentiment that awakens reverence for an object believed to have had sacred or venerable associations is much the same in ourselves as in the Neapolitan. Every man who carries in his watch-case a photograph or a lock of the hair of a dead child proves this. Everybody who pays a high price for autograph letters of celebrated characters, which he cannot read, when he could get the printed text of the same letters for a song, also proves it. The market for exorbitantly priced first editions of books of which later and improved texts can be obtained for next to nothing, is founded and lives upon the same instinct as the vast relic industry of the Roman Church. (*Crede experto*. I am a bibliomaniac myself, and no more to be trusted in an old bookshop than a drunkard in a saloon.)

All of which means that the so-called superstition which among savages succumbs to magic, witchcraft and taboo,

and among Italian and other peasants induces relic-worship, is not contemptible in them and not extinct in ourselves. Suggestibility is a native and ineradicable tendency of man's constitution. Like all his other inborn tendencies, it needs to be subjected to the guidance of reason. It is one of the greatest means of education. The fact that it has been and is still being abused is a reason not for neglecting it, but for understanding it thoroughly and insisting upon its proper use. Among savages it is the cause of superstitious terrors; among ourselves it is the cause of worry — which is equally unnecessary and equally disastrous in its consequences.

IV. HOW SCIENCE HELPS US

The greatest debt we owe to science is not for the physical comforts and mechanical conveniences by which it has enriched our lives and contributed to our mastery over the resources of nature; it is for the inward peace, the spiritual serenity, which its researches have conferred upon the world. The art of rigidly investigating evidence, and of distinguishing true causes and effects from mere co-existents and sequents, has been the real emancipator of the human mind. The destruction of the once universal belief in malevolent spirits, magic and witchcraft has been a greater blessing to mankind than the utilization of steam and electricity. To be sure, the world sometimes looks poorer to us when we regard it with the disillusioned eyes of science than when we look through the roseate spectacles of the older myth-makers. Keats was melancholy because "*There was an awful*

rainbow *once* in heaven," and rude science had destroyed its awfulness. Mr. Zangwill sometimes falls into the dumps for similar reasons. We find him closing his delicate "*Sylva Poetarum*" with these lines:

*The nymphs are gone, the fairies flown,
The olden Presences unknown;
The ancient gods for ever fled,
The stars are silent overhead;
The music of the spheres is still,
The night is dark, the wind is chill.
The later gods have followed Pan,
And Man is left alone with Man.*¹

Very exquisite; and the undertone of mourning that the poet conveys is itself a luxury to be enjoyed. But to see what the glorious old myths of the poets really meant in practice, we must turn to the books of Tylor, Sir James Frazer and Mr. Andrew Lang. When we contemplate the spectacles of insane terror and devilish cruelty which they disclose, we feel much more reconciled to the departure of the nymphs and fairies, — more particularly since we can still enjoy the poetry and the art they have left behind them.²

¹ *Blind Children*, by Israel Zangwill. (London: Heinemann, 1903.)

² In his book *Psyche's Task*, Sir J. G. Frazer apologizes for superstition on the ground of its restraining effect upon anti-social conduct at a stage at which men were incapable of rational restraints. The apology will satisfy few; perhaps, indeed, only those who would be satisfied with Sam Weller's man who "cut his little boy's head off to cure him of squinting." But the book gives a mine of information in slight compass, presented with that fullness of knowledge and charm of style which always characterize this distinguished author's work.

No doubt, the sense of law and regularity in nature can easily be exaggerated. When this happens, philosophy runs to fatalism and science reduces the soul to an impotent shadow of the body. Many a kindly spirit, from Hobbes to Mark Twain, has been bullied out of its self-respect by supposing the world a machine and depreciating the self. But when the sense of law is not exaggerated, it strengthens man's faith in his own freedom and his power to determine his destiny. In this sense we can gladly endorse the stately prose-poem to which old Richard Hooker rises at the end of the first book of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*: "Of Law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power: both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as *the mother of their peace and joy.*"

The serenity which the scientific conception of the world has thus brought us makes the earth truly our home. We sleep quietly as our ocean liners keep their giant stride amid the wildest tempests of the sea. The aviator whirls through the depths of heaven, strong in the faith that the whole universe is upholding him, and that, at all events, no malevolent wills, no incalculable personal power will thwart the foresight by which he has made his bid for safety against the known obstacles in his course.

V. MENTAL CAUSES AND PHYSICAL EFFECTS

It is to science, also, that we owe our growing realization of the interdependence and causal connection between psychical and physical states. The perception that gloom and melancholy are caused by physical conditions, such as indigestion or bad weather, is as old as the hills; but the realization that conditions like dyspepsia, nervous troubles, and even serious functional diseases, are caused by states of mind, and can be cured by changing states of mind, is only now being verified and turned to profitable account. To be sure, the truth was sometimes perceived and acted upon in the pre-scientific age, but it was not consciously formulated, or made the basis of a universally available curative system, until our own time. It had undoubtedly been grasped half a century ago by the man Quimby, who cured Mrs. Eddy of serious physical trouble which had a mental origin, and from whom she derived the practically valuable elements in the system now called Christian Science. At the time of her cure, she was rapturously grateful to Quimby, and upon his death she wrote some lines in which she acknowledged him her master. And who that reads the New Testament can doubt that the intuitive perception of the relation of mental disturbances to functional disorders of the body was the secret of the success of Jesus in healing sickness and "casting out devils"?

Many persons, including myself, who are unable to accept Christian Science as a philosophy or a religion, are ready to bear testimony to its value as a therapeutic agent

in troubles of mental or psychic origin. No religion, as Hooker said, ever consisted wholly and entirely of untruths. Just as (to borrow an illustration from Huxley) nine-tenths of a dose of bark may consist of half-rotten wood, which you swallow for the sake of the one-tenth of useful medicine, so many a religion nine-tenths false has lived and won grateful disciples by virtue of its fraction of vital truth.¹ I have heard of a man who, as a result of serious business and domestic troubles, was reduced to the verge of desperation and suicide. His woes had led him to drink and smoke to excess, with the result that his nerves were in a pitiable condition. Christian Science healers assuaged his mental trouble, assured him that he would come out all right, and induced him to stop smoking and drinking. He thought his power to break these habits was communicated in some metaphysical fashion by the healers; whereas, no doubt, it was his own latent power which was awakened. Nevertheless, the effect was his complete recovery from the miserable condition to which his afflictions had reduced him. If it be urged that the specific doctrines of Christian Science had nothing to do with this cure, I readily admit it; but still it is true that without the body of doctrine and the organization which it enabled the shrewd founder to build up, there might not have been persons armed with the necessary secret to come to this victim's relief. And he was only one of a great multitude.

That the relation between false beliefs and physical

¹ "Institutions do not live on lies. They either live by the truth and usefulness which there is in them, or they do not live at all." — J. A. Froude, *Short Studies in Great Subjects*.

conditions can be perceived and utilized for curative purposes without accepting or knowing anything about Christian Science, was proved to me, by a case of which I had first-hand knowledge, more than twenty years ago. I knew a woman who was convinced that she was dying of phthisis. Her doctor agreed that she was dying, though the cause puzzled him; and between his uncertainty and the patient's conviction, she would very soon have died in earnest. Fortunately, the nurse, a woman of rare insight and fine common sense, detected the truth of the situation. She convinced the patient that the phthisis existed only in her belief, with the result that in a short time the symptoms vanished. The patient recovered, and is now, after twenty years, still enjoying capital health. Worry — the mental apprehension of non-existent evils — was the real cause of her condition. When that was removed, its effects naturally disappeared.

We must repeat that the diseases which such methods cure are not imaginary diseases. They may be produced by the imagination; but that is a totally different matter. Products of imagination are among the most real things in the world — *Hamlet*, *Faust*, and the Venus of Milo, for example. There is a vast difference between *imagined* and *imaginary* things. The imagination is a true cause, a creative force; nor is there anything unreal about its products, whether they take the form of glorious works of art, or of inhibitions of behaviour, or of actual deadly diseases.

That effects produced by mental causes will vanish when the causes are removed, is a truth which may be accepted and acted upon by itself, without invoking a

metaphysical system or a patented and copyrighted religion to explain it. It is a piece of knowledge which will slip into the pocket of any philosophy. Any Roman Catholic or Protestant or Jew or agnostic can add it to his stock of information, without abandoning or adulterating the beliefs that make him mentally comfortable. Worry is a mental fact that often produces physical disturbance, and that greatly decreases one's spiritual vitality and mental efficiency, even when its physiological correlatives do not become noticeable.

The Freudian system, in so far as it is sound and effective, proceeds mainly upon this principle. The truth in question has two aspects: (a) the power of the mind over the body; (b) the power of the mind over itself.

The Freudian analysis recognizes that psychical causes continue to operate and produce their effects long after they have slipped out of conscious memory, or even if they have never been consciously recognized as causes. A long-forgotten fright or injury still reverberates throughout the regions of "sub-conscious" mental life. The Freudians have demonstrated that if these haunters of the cellarage can be dragged up to the light and recognized by their victims for what they are, they lose their power. Very often the cures effected are of the kind that the naïve consciousness has always called miraculous; and miraculous they are, in the sense that we only know *that* the psychic phenomena act as causes. We do not know *how* or *why*. We also know only that their effects are dissipated when the causes are recognized; but again we know not how or why. Consider the Freudian case of the woman cured of dumbness. The analysis disclosed the

fact that this woman had originally hypnotized or suggested herself into dumbness through a long-continued habit of absolute silence in the sick chamber of a relative whom she was nursing. She had forgotten, or had never known, the cause of her condition. When it was extracted from the tangle of her unconscious memories and she recognized it, her dumbness was at once and finally cured. Many parallel cases, no doubt, could be furnished out of the experience gained during the war in treating shellshock.

VI. THE PEACE PRODUCED BY WAR

Another familiar truth that has received abundant confirmation during the war years is the fact that real troubles expel imaginary ones, and great troubles drive out small. Often enough, as Carlyle says, the black spot in our sunshine is the shadow of ourselves. In ordinary times we seldom learn how self-indulgent we are, or how our self-indulgence beguiles us into thinking ourselves victims of wrongs and ills which become terribly real to us, though they are real only because thinking has made them so. This must be the explanation of the fact that during the war the number of suicides in England greatly decreased as compared with the pre-war average. No doubt the same change was experienced in other warring nations, but England is the only land concerning which the news has reached me. The fact would be astounding if we did not know that suicide is the result of a state of mind always in large part, and often entirely, self-engendered. It comes of making and imagining the worst of real troubles and mentally constructing unreal ones in addition.

The war gave people something else than themselves to think about. It set up a great mortality among imagined diseases. People concentrated their attention on the all-absorbing task of saving their countries from deadly peril. They lost the smug and self-petting lives that they had formerly lived, and found a new life, immeasurably keener and more zestful. Unconsciously they cured themselves of their own griefs, and rescued themselves from dangerous and morbid self-absorption, in striving to heal the griefs of others. The psychology of the process was identical with that of the old Buddhist legend of the bereaved mother who asked the Buddha to raise her child from the dead. The Buddha was no miracle-monger, and did not deceive himself into thinking that he could do what she desired. But his compassionate heart was touched, and he told her that he could not restore her child to life unless she brought him a handful of mustard-seed from a house into which death had never entered. She set out on her quest and, of course, found no such house. But in going from place to place, she became wrapt up in the task of ministering to the sufferings and assuaging the griefs of the multitude of the bereaved whom she met. Her mission became so absorbing that she entirely forgot its cause; so that when, long afterwards, she met the Buddha and he inquired whether she had recovered from her sorrow, she replied, "What sorrow, my Lord?"

One of the greatest therapeutic agents in the world is laughter, and especially the power of laughing at oneself. I suppose it will never be known how many of the wounded of the Great War owe their recovery even more to the

cartoons of Captain Bairnsfather and the stories of Mr. W. W. Jacobs than to the superb skill of the surgeons. Surely nothing but the heavenly gift of laughter could have enabled the Tommy and the poilu to endure those years of purgatory in the trenches. Self-conceit is a fruitful source of morbidity and misery, and the power of laughing at oneself is the greatest cure for it. Most of us would be happier and better if we could forget ourselves; and the selves are usually well worth forgetting!

VII. HOW TO BE WEALTHY, THOUGH RICH

I venture to say that serenity — the serenity that we all have it in our own power to attain — is a potent cure for financial worries. Do not misunderstand me. I have no gold-brick religion to sell you, which will send all your investments to a premium or secure you business promotion and an increase of income within two weeks. If I should start advertising anything of this kind, you would inquire into my own financial position, and laugh. You would think at once of the pathetic case of the bald-headed man who tried to sell a hair-restorer. All I say is that inward peace and good humour, while they cannot, of course, create money, do create or increase the energy which enables men to earn money. It is in your own power to secure the merry heart that goes all the way.

One of the steps toward the attainment of this serenity must be to clarify the conception of wealth and decide wherein it consists. America beholds oftener than most nations the sorry spectacle of the "rich fool," as the

Gospel rudely calls the man who gains the whole world at the loss of his soul. We scarcely needed the lancet-edged irony of Henry Adams about the people who are "pathetic in their helplessness to do anything with power when it comes to them." We have all seen specimens of the type for ourselves. Probably we should admit in principle Ruskin's contention that "there is no wealth but life." We should agree that not money, but the power to use money for the enrichment of one's own spirit and the common life, is the only true wealth. The craving for money and what it can procure is one of those non-rational impulses of our nature which are boundless in their demand. Many a man would be truly wealthy with what he already possesses if he were wise enough to recognize himself as such, or had not bartered for his money the power to use and enjoy it.

Some friends of mine once laughed at me for expressing (as I did in all seriousness) the opinion that, for people above the actual necessity-line, wealth and poverty are in large part states of mind. But I illustrated my argument by the following example: Suppose two men each with an income of \$100 a week. Assume that they have the same family responsibilities and that neither is in debt. Are they equally well off? Not necessarily! If one of them has formerly had an income of \$20 a week and has suddenly jumped to \$100, and the other has formerly had an income of \$500 a week and has suddenly dropped to \$100, the former will feel rich and free and the latter inexpressibly poor and cramped. One of them is actually rich and the other genuinely poor.

How are we to explain the once prevalent feminine

fashion of fainting, and its disappearance? The jelly-fish dolls with whom Dickens's adorable male characters had to live considered it a part of their duty and necessary to their self-respect to faint away on every possible and impossible occasion. Since women have gone in for votes and athletics and found real work in the world, they have abandoned the fainting habit, together with many other results and indications of their former slavish position in society. The mid-Victorian sal-volatile sniffers would have swooned at the bare idea of any woman doing what the women munition workers did through the four great years. They would have thought it impossible for any but Amazons to have endured the strain and done the work of the Salvation Army girls in the trenches. *The difference is a matter of will and effective belief.* The women of the fainting period had never been challenged, and had never challenged themselves, to thrust their will into such effective participation in the life and work of the world as would carry them out of their artificial and doll-like state. Our munition workers and the red-ribboned lasses of the trenches found their salvation in the only possible way — by not seeking it for themselves, and by seeking to save others.

VIII. SOME FAVORITE NIGHTMARES

A friend of mine, a splendid scholar, once admitted that he was haunted by anxiety as to what was to happen to him in the last fifteen or twenty years of his life. He assumed (gratuitously, of course) that his earning power would be then exhausted, that his accumulations would be

insufficient for his maintenance, and that there would not be enough decent gratitude in the circle that his labors had benefited to provide him with the indispensable minimum. It was easy to point out to him that, by this curious fashion of taking thought for a remote morrow, he was decreasing to-day's efficiency, and by his useless worrying was doing his worst to precipitate the very predicament he dreaded. But it seldom avails to meet such a case with an argument, even though the argument be unanswerable and intellectually coercive. Such a man needs a change in his state of mind, which nobody but himself can effect for him. He needs a faith and confidence which are, at the worst, not more irrational than his present doubt and mistrust. Nobody could prove to the people of Laputa that the sun would not wear out, or that the earth would not fall into it, in their own time. Yet we can all see that they were insane to worry about the possibility. My friend, and the millions like him, might find comfort if they would but remember that the resources of this poor old universe have sufficed to keep the human race alive for a good many thousands of years, and that they themselves have lived happily through many days, in any one of which disaster was antecedently possible. When one reads the newspapers, with their perpetual chronicle of wrecks and calamities, of epidemics and poisonings, of moving accidents by flood and field generally, one feels that it is well-nigh miraculous that we are alive. A good deal of luck or providence must have attended everybody who succeeded in getting born at all, or in surviving that curious transformation by a single day. Nevertheless, here we are. Whether to-morrow contains for us death by a railway

accident or the unexpected inheritance of a fortune, we cannot know, and we need not care. To brood over the possibility of disaster is as foolish as it would be to count upon the possibility of the fortune.

If I may judge by my correspondence, multitudes of people are now lying awake at night half crazed with apprehension over future wars, which are, to say the least, a hundredfold less probable than they were in 1914, when almost nobody worried about them. The possibility of a combination between Russia, Germany and Japan — Russia devoid of any unified organ of sovereignty to marshal its vast latent energies, Germany crushed in the field and probably sick forever of the will-o'-the-wisp of world-conquest, and Japan bound by a hundred new ties to the Allied Powers — is turning many people grey with apprehension. Many others among us are unable to sleep for fear lest the folly and malice of anti-Britishers here and anti-Americans in Britain may lead to an Anglo-American war. For my part, I never expect to lose a moment's sleep over either of these nightmares. Both, of course, are abstractly possible, just as it is possible that Bolsheviki may overthrow our Republic or that we may all die in the next epidemic of influenza. But I rest in the fact that we have survived former epidemics, that the sanity of our people and the resources of our government have been able to deal with Bolsheviki before, under other names, and that the democratic common sense of Americans and Britishers has kept the peace between us for more than a hundred years, although we have had probably more conflicts of interest and provocatives to war than have arisen between any other two powers during the same

period. To be sure there are in every community (as the historian McMaster somewhat inurbanely puts it) "select companies of incorrigible fools." But I rest in faith on that larger factor — overlooked because it is so often silent or inarticulate — called "the common sense of most." I am free from worry about wars involving America and the Great Powers of Europe for the next generation. Nothing — not even the United States Senate itself — can shake my confidence, which I insist is not irrational, although it covers the future, in which all is inevitably uncertain.

I am much charmed with a text that I once saw hanging on the wall in a friend's house: "I have had lots of troubles in my life, most of which never happened." I am resolved that for the rest of my days I will have no troubles except such as really do happen.

IX. THE ART OF GROWING YOUNG

Our prosaic western minds are shocked at the daring oriental figures of speech in the New Testament which bid those who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven to "become as little children," and even to be "*born again*." We are apt, in our lack of humour and of intuitive sense for finer meanings, to cry out with that wooden-minded fellow Nicodemus, "How can a man be born when he is old?" The great poetical teacher who used these expressions was not suggesting something patently impossible. He was not advising, as Hamlet advised Polonius, that men, like crabs, should walk backwards; that they should reverse the history of their physical machinery. He had

probably noticed that, as a general rule, it is inconvenient for the oak to return to the acorn, and for a man to receive a second time the assistance that each man's mother gives him once. But he was also aware that even in physical nature there is such a thing as a wonderful power of self-renewal, which becomes visible (to a careful observer) every springtime. And have we not all seen men looking literally "ten years younger" when some great strain has been removed or some unusual good fortune has befallen them?

The simple fact is that the mind or spirit *need* not grow old with the body. There is no *necessary* correlation or parallelism between the inevitable decline of the bodily powers and the enfeebling of the spiritual energies. You can remain young in spirit if you will; you can even grow younger. It is not always a man's own fault if he does not; but it is certainly true that, in a vast proportion of cases, the misfortune of spiritual ageing could be avoided by the simple consciousness that it need not happen, and will not happen if one resorts to a discipline that is well within one's power.

What is meant by becoming as little children? Look at the first children you meet, and note closely the power of wonder they display, the absorbing interest they discover in a thousand things and happenings which fail to interest you solely because you will not loose your attention upon them. Being childlike does not mean that one shall not suffer keenly from real troubles. But the peculiarity of children is their power of thrusting their woes behind them, of ceasing to suffer from troubles that have ceased to exist, and of steeping their attention in new interests.

Talking of the New Testament reminds me of a little story in it that I have always loved, because I venture to think that I see in it not the record of a miracle, but the indication of such a sense of humour as one cannot help suspecting was possessed by the poet to whom we owe the Parables and anecdotes like that of the pharisee and the publican. I refer to the tale of Jesus sleeping in the boat during the storm. As presented in the text of Mark and Matthew, this is the story of a miracle. The point that attracted the evangelists was their belief that by saying to the waves, "Peace, be still," Jesus had stopped the storm. Probably they would not have thought the story worth telling unless they had seen this in it.

Now, I admit that it is impossible for us to pierce back through this second- or third- or tenth-hand story and divine *with certainty* the original happening. The interpretation I shall suggest is purely conjectural. It is based on the best notion I can form, by brooding over the Gospels and comparing them with other literature and with general experience, as to the kind of man Jesus probably was. Two facts suggest themselves as significant: one, that the disciples were wild with fright; ¹ the other, that Jesus was asleep, and sleeping so soundly that they had to wake him up. Is it not possible that, grasping the situation more truly than their scared minds could do, he saw that the squall was about to subside? (These lake tempests are apt to begin and end very suddenly.) I suspect that Jesus was amused to see his friends in such a funk, and that the expression "Peace, be still," was either addressed *to them*, or else to the waves and the

¹ Matthew viii. 25 ff., Mark iv. 38 ff.

wind by way of chaffing his friends. Supposing that this happened, and that the squall subsided immediately after the words were uttered, we can easily see how the joke could be turned into a miracle. The sun rises after the cock crows. There have been hens innocent enough to believe that their particular cock's crowing caused the sun to rise.

But I am digressing. What I wanted particularly to point out was the fact that the great, serene man, Jesus Christ, could lie down and sleep in a storm that drove his companions off their heads. The power of sleeping under such conditions is a great sanative force, that not only cures troubles produced by imagination, but gives us strength to encounter solid and external difficulties; and *this power we can create within ourselves*. I once expressed to an old friend of Mr. David Lloyd George my wonder that any man could endure the multitude of burdens laid on that much-reviled statesman's shoulders. He answered that one of Lloyd George's secrets was his ability at any odd moment to go off to sleep. He said that "David," as he called him, could drop dead asleep if he had five minutes to wait for a train. This must be the power, coupled with his unfailing vivacity and sense of humour, that enabled Lloyd George to keep his head and his heart throughout those desperate years when the fate of England lay upon him more than upon any other man.

X. THE CONTAGIOUSNESS OF GOOD HEALTH

It is said that when Colonel Ingersoll was asked to mention one definite respect in which the world might have been made better, he replied that good health should have been made catching, instead of disease. But surely Colonel Ingersoll's experience, if he had fairly interrogated it, would have shown him that good health is catching. He must have been singularly unlucky if he had never known people whose very presence is new life and strength, who radiate sunshine, whose glance is death to morbid broodings, and by touching the hem of whose garment you stay the issue of blood from your heart which the phantom evils of your imagination have caused. Certainly this has been my experience, and I do not believe it is exceptional. If faith in our own powers is a cure for troubles of psychic origin, — as it is, — and if that faith can be imparted by one to another or awakened by one in another, — as it can, — is not this a plain, scientific connection of cause and effect establishing the contagiousness of good health?

During the war we talked much of "morale." What is morale but a technical term for the kind of spiritual good health, productive of physical consequences, which soldiers catch from each other, from their officers, and from the people behind them? Our faith in our brave defenders created or intensified their faith in themselves and their cause, which faith was the parent of victory.

Can we not apply these simple results of experience to our daily life? Most difficulties vanish before the buoyant

conviction that we can overcome them. It has been found in teaching children that as soon as one can really convince them that what is asked is not beyond their powers, that time and concentration will bring them through, and that they can do what other children have done, they stride forward over difficulties that really were insuperable until the conviction came. We are all children of a stiffer growth, and we have to do for ourselves what the wise teacher does for the child. But we can do it. Faith does remove mountains, — especially mountains which are not really there, but which our imagination has solidified out of the clouds.

Christianity has often enough been perverted into a religion of gloom. Theological literature, from the days of Tertullian and earlier to those of Jonathan Edwards and later, shows how a hundred generations of a hundred sects enjoyed contemplating the universal misery which their own frightful theories had invented for mankind. They could not be happy without hell, or love God until they were convinced that His intentions toward the majority of the human race were diabolical. But this awful gloom was certainly not the atmosphere of the founders of the religion. Jesus, if we may trust the fourth Gospel, told his followers, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." If Jesus did not say this (and some higher critic is certain to have a private intuition that he didn't), at all events early followers of his believed that he did; which is a fairly good clue to the kind of impression he produced. And St. Paul, beloved and misunderstood of the Puritans, the great teacher of

Calvin and the nightmare-makers — even St. Paul laid it down, in one of his most unquestionably authentic epistles, that “the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace,”¹ and elsewhere that “the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”²

Peace and joy are truly the normal fruits of the spirit — of the human spirit. The heart of man itself is the source of them. The world would speedily become a scene of joy if only the countless causes of unnecessary worry could be eliminated; if only we ceased to concern ourselves with evils the source of which is a creative imagination that would be better employed in conjuring up gladness. To rid ourselves of the superfluous baggage of self-originated troubles would go far toward giving us the strength and courage we need to encounter those real and unavoidable sorrows which lurk at some of the turns in every man's pathway.

¹ Galatians v. 22.

² Romans xiv. 17.

II

THE PESSIMISM OF MARK TWAIN

(1919)

THE world is greatly indebted to Mr. Albert Bigelow Paine for his *Life of Mark Twain* and the two volumes of *Letters* that he has edited. The biography has many of the qualities which make the work of Boswell unique. If there is a faint infusion of that too passionate and indiscriminating loyalty which sometimes makes the zeal of Boswell funny, one cannot complain, since without the temper that produces such excesses the biography could scarcely have been as valuable as it is.

That Mark Twain was a great and good, an admirable and a lovable man, to whom the whole world owes a debt unpayable and ever to be gratefully acknowledged, is a proposition which surely will find few questioners. But he was not a god or a superman. Of his work we may say, as Whitman said of his own, "Who touches this touches a man." And to be a man is to have limitations. The secret of true appreciation is to be able clearly to see and rightly to value the distinctive excellence of a man; to love him for what he is and can do, not to disparage him for what he is not and cannot do. The ascription of all perfections to any one man is a form of admiration which betrays its own critical worthlessness. Discrimina-

tion along with catholicity, — these are the two great qualities necessary to citizenship in the Republic of Letters.

When, therefore, Mr. Paine, not content with claiming for Mark Twain the many rare and enviable distinctions to which he is justly entitled, insists upon declaring that "he was one of the foremost American *philosophers* of his day," we feel that the biographer is unwittingly doing a disservice to the great man whom he so rightly delighted to honour. It is as though one should acclaim Mr. Edison as a poet, or insist that Grant was a great architect. The condition of winning supremacy in one field is inability to compete for it in others. It is nothing against a great soldier that he is not a good architect, or against a great inventive genius that he is not also a poet. And when we decline, as we must, to accept Mr. Paine's rating of Clemens as a philosopher, we are not attacking Clemens; we are really defending him against an unintentional attack.

Mark Twain was the greatest humorist and satirist who has yet lived in America. As a humorist he has not been surpassed in any age or nation. He was a splendid patriot, as he proved by his strenuous resistance to the jingoisms and corruptions of his day. He was a man of infinitely loving and tender heart. He was a passionate idealist, so exquisitely sensitive that he suffered almost to the point of heartbreak over evils to which the thicker-skinned mass of us are conveniently insensitive.

No man was ever franker than Clemens in his insistence upon human limitations. His characteristic way of expressing it was to declare that on some points we are all insane. He even went the unusual length of admitting

that, inasmuch as other people's religions seemed absurd to him, his own religion also was probably absurd. We shall surely display a lack of humour unbecoming in readers of Clemens if we forget these generalizations, or fail to realize that Clemens too had his eccentricities, his whimsies, and certain mental shortcomings which must frankly be set in the balance against his customary strong sanity and his superb geniality and loveliness.

One small but illuminating example of this weak side of Mark Twain is his essay entitled *Is Shakespeare Dead?* It is a dogmatic affirmation that Shakespeare did not write his own plays and that Francis Bacon did write them. It betrays a surprising unfamiliarity with Elizabethan literature in general, and with the works and mind of Bacon in particular; and it rests upon *a priori* and question-begging arguments which would serve just as well to prove that Mark Twain could not have been the author of his own works as they serve to prove that Shakespeare did not write his plays. Clemens here was naïvely trusting the very unsafe guidance of Sir George Greenwood. The danger of faith in authority could hardly be more grossly exemplified.

Now, the tendency to dogmatize on insufficient evidence, to credit oneself with greater knowledge and competence than one really possesses (although it in no wise spoils the kind of work in which Mark Twain was distinctively excellent), is a very serious obstacle to the working out of a satisfactory system of religion or philosophy. And if a man does not work out his religion and philosophy for himself, but buys them ready-made on the world's great bargain-counter, these peculiarities of mind are dreadfully

apt to make him choose an ill-fitting system and to mistake attractive-looking shoddy for genuine wool. One cannot avoid the feeling that it was this rather headlong temper which accounts for the system of pitch-black pessimism professed by Mark Twain. He had followed, with the intelligent interest of an open-minded layman, the general trend of the scientific development of his time, but he had not penetrated the metaphysic which is implied in that science, or questioned any of its provisional working assumptions. Not only had he failed to envisage these problems, but he was apparently unaware that in this region there existed any problems requiring solution. He thus discloses the characteristic defects of an undisciplined mind. He had never opened the first page of Berkeley or Kant. In fact, concerning the problems of philosophy, Henry Adams's poignant phrase hits him: he was "ignorant that there is a thing called ignorance."

It is best to recognize this frankly, while continuing to insist that his lack of training and skill as a philosopher is nothing against Mark Twain. And certainly, while we reject his pessimism, we must recognize that the intense sensitiveness to suffering and evil which led him to it was altogether honorable, and was a part of the very power which enabled him so wonderfully to experience and convey through his books the abounding joy of life. His brother Orion, in a letter written at the time of Henry Clemens's death in 1859, said with acute insight, "Sam's organization is such as to feel the utmost extreme of every feeling."¹

The characteristic thus discriminatingly indicated by

¹ A. B. Paine, *Mark Twain: A Biography*, vol. iii, p. 1592.

Orion Clemens is the secret not only of Mark Twain's pessimism but also of his wonderful power. It is this skinless sensitiveness that makes the humorist and satirist as well as the pessimist. Black cynicism is the danger that besets the path of all men gifted above their fellows with insight into the incongruities that make life funny. The case of Swift compares instructively with that of Clemens. Behind Swift's mask of cynicism, there lurked an unusually sensitive and tender heart; as witness his love for Stella and his regard for Arbuthnot and a few other select friends. The *saeva indignatio* that tore Swift's heart (as his epitaph reminds us) represents the souring of a superabundance of the milk of human kindness. Contrast the earlier pages of *Gulliver* with the nightmare fury of the Fourth Part, and you see the peculiar peril that besets the satirist,—the peril to which both Swift and Clemens at last succumbed. The man who begins by laughing good-naturedly at the foibles and inconsistencies and minor insincerities of the human race, is in danger of ending, as Swift ended, by regarding the human race with fierce hatred, thinking of them as noxious and deadly vermin, morally lower than the very brutes. This is the final judgment of Clemens as of Swift, and that frightful picture of the Yahoos is scarcely more repellent than the condemnation of mankind in *The Mysterious Stranger*.

Even Shakespeare incurred this danger; but his magnificent spiritual constitution was strong enough to carry him through the disease and enable him to regain his moral health and balance. In his early comedies we have the mood of gayest laughter, such a mood as inspires Mark

Twain at his kindest and best. But in a few short years the bubbling fun of *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado about Nothing* is displaced by the misanthropy of *Coriolanus* and the shattering desolation of *Lear*. Had Shakespeare died after writing *Lear*, we should have been tempted (despite such characters as Kent and Cordelia) to suppose that his final mood was that of Swift in the Houyhnhnms and of Clemens in *The Mysterious Stranger*. But, happily, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* are there to testify that a beautiful and serene sunset succeeded the lurid storm of Shakespeare's mid-years.

Unhappily, with Mark Twain the last thoughts were the bitterest. True, his theoretical despair of mankind came early, and there are traces of it in his brightest books; but it is nevertheless painful to contrast *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*, and, above all, that most buoyant and joyous of books, *The Innocents Abroad*, with *What is Man?* and *The Mysterious Stranger*. This last (post-humous) publication has been made up by the publishers to look like a book for children. There is no book in the world that I should be more pained to see a child reading.

It may be superfluous to search through Clemens's career for experiences explanatory of the estimate of human life which he finally accepted. The fact that others, whose gifts were like his, have arrived at similar conclusions, suggests a correlation between the springs of satire and of pessimism; suggests that mockery of folly has a natural tendency to grow into frenzy against fools; and that Clemens would have ended as he did no matter what his personal experiences might have been. Never-

theless, two episodes in his early career seem to have furnished the occasion which made him intellectually conscious of his native leaning to misanthropy and pessimism. One of these was his association in 1857 with the Scotsman, Macfarlane. This man was of a type not uncommon among the working classes of Great Britain, and, for that matter, by no means unparalleled among the working class in any western land during the nineteenth century. He was a reader of serious books, and had argued himself into atheism, materialism and determinism. During the months that Clemens lodged with him in Cincinnati, he expounded this body of beliefs to Clemens with marked force and ability, with the result that whatever of Christian teaching Clemens had imbibed in boyhood was driven out of his system, and he embraced the beliefs of his friend, which he held substantially to the end of his life. All that he retained of his youthful religion was the mere word God, which, in his use of it, never means anything more than the word Nature; except, indeed, when he uses "God" as a stick to beat the last dust of moral credit and self-respect out of the human race in the dialogue called *What is Man?*

The other episode was the tragic death of his brother Henry as a result of the burning of the steamship *Pennsylvania* on the Mississippi in the year 1858. We need not narrate the circumstances. They are well known, and are fully and clearly told by Mr. Paine.¹ Clemens blamed himself for his brother's presence on the ill-fated ship, and still more for his rashness in urging an inexperienced medical student to administer to the suffering

¹ *Op. cit.*, vol. i, pp. 139-144.

boy a guesswork dose of morphine, which was probably excessive, and may have been the cause of his death. With the curious illogicality of the good-hearted determinist, he abhorred and anathematized himself for these events, over which, of course, according to his philosophy, he had no control, and for which he could not possibly be responsible. If he was right in his excessive self-condemnation, his determinism obviously hasn't a leg to stand upon. But, characteristically enough, it was through this experience that he developed into a conscious fatalist.

Mark Twain regarded the world as a vast machine and man as a little machine within it. Man is a complex piece of mechanism, actuated exclusively by external causes, which he is as powerless to resist as an aeroplane or a printing press.

It follows that there neither is nor can be any such thing as the smallest grain of freedom for man. The category of causality is applied to man's entire life, physical, volitional and intellectual; and causality means always the impact and operation of external stimuli.

The universal characteristic of mankind, he declares, is selfishness. It is impossible for any human being to perform an act which is not more gratifying to himself than any of its possible alternatives. Every act is the inevitable and only possible resultant of the motive dominant at the moment of its performance. Hence there can be no such thing as self-sacrifice in the strict sense. Men may perform acts involving much unpleasantness, but only if they thereby gain a pleasure greater (*i.e.* more satisfying) than the avoidance of the act or the performance of some other would have entailed. It is a case of number one,

first, last and always. If the conduct most pleasing to number one happens to be good and beneficent, the man deserves no credit; if it happens to be bad and maleficent, he deserves no blame.

Clemens continues, as we have seen, to speak of God; but by that term he means simply the unknowable energy that sustains the universe. If this energy is personal (and he sometimes seems to imply that it is), it is nevertheless as indifferent to man as man is to the micro-organisms in his body. God does not mean Providence. He, or It, does not stand in any ethical relation to man. His ways are not man's; neither are His ends.

Inasmuch as it is impossible for man to possess any moral worth or achieve any moral desert, the only thing that a rational being can long for is death. Life is a scene of perpetual, unmitigated, irremediable frustration. The nature of man is corrupt at the root, and there is no salvation possible for him. Clemens's doctrine, in short, is Calvinism minus the arbitrary grace that (according to the sixteenth century) plucked a few brands from the everlasting bonfire. Expressions of this conviction abound in Mark Twain's works. A very pathetic one is the little fairy tale entitled "The Five Boons of Life." Another is the story — strangely regarded by some readers as a peculiarly fine expression of Mark Twain's fun — called "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg." Careful reading shows the meaning of that story to be essentially the same as that of *The Mysterious Stranger*. The man who sends the temptation to Hadleyburg does not corrupt it; he only tears the mask from a city already corrupt, and proves that there is in that city "none righteous, no,

not one." Hadleyburg is the world, and we are all as its citizens.

Such were the views held with steadily increasing conviction by the greatest of American humorists. He began to put them in writing as early as 1883, but did not make them public until 1906, when a small edition of *What is Man?* was printed for private circulation in America, and another by the Rationalist Press Association in London. This dialogue contains hardly a trace of the wonderful humour which we expect from Mark Twain. It is a cold, clear, prosaic summary of the gospel of mechanism, fatalism and pessimism. Had it been published without his name, and had we not the disclosure of the facts in Mr. Paine's biography, few readers would have detected from the style that it was the work of the author of *The Innocents Abroad*.

Clemens in this dialogue makes out his case by the old-fashioned process of chopping man up into little pieces and then representing each of the pieces as an independent, external force acting upon the man. The argument may be summarized thus: There is the man *and* his will *and* his mind *and* his temperament *and* his motives. External causes act upon the mind, which can do nothing but receive impressions passively. Although Hobbes and Locke and Hume are not cited, the reasoning is identical with theirs. The mind is a shaven tablet or a photographic plate. The impressions it receives act upon the will, which necessarily responds to the strongest of them, like a scale-pan when a weight heavier than the counterweight is placed upon it. Temperament means an aboriginal tendency to cheerfulness or melancholy, which cannot

possibly change, and remains unaffected by the impressions made from without upon the mind and the decisions forced through the mind upon the will.

The logic, as we have said, is old and familiar. It cannot be refuted so long as its premises are accepted; but the premises are a series of question-begging assumptions. That man is a machine, is an assumption, not a piece of knowledge. *If* he is a machine, of course he can respond only to stimuli originating elsewhere than within himself.

If it were worth while to controvert this position, one might begin by asking how such a theory could account for the infinite variety of responses to the same stimuli. When it is said that man is "what heredity and environment have made him" — or in other words, as this theory says in effect, that there is really no such entity as a self, — how is it proposed to account for the incredibly different products of the same heredity and the same environment? Why should there be such a difference, for instance, between Samuel Clemens and his brother Orion? Were they not children of the same parents, descended from the same ancestors, born and reared in the same *milieu*? Whence the startling unlikenesses of mind, character and temperament often found in twins, who are physically almost indistinguishable?

"Heredity and environment" is a good mouth-filling phrase. It has saved so many people the irksome labour of thinking, providing them with an inexpensive philosophy that makes them intellectually comfortable, that it seems rather brutal to put it under the microscope. Unfortunately this must be done: with the disastrous result

that "heredity and environment" turns out to mean — other people; your ancestors and your neighbours. That a man does not make himself, but is made what he is by heredity and environment, amounts to saying of each man, "He makes others; himself he cannot make."

There are two characteristics common to all machines. The first is that they are planned and designed, by a mind or minds, as means to a definite foreseen end. The other is that they always react in a specific way to a given stimulus. It really is not possible to declare man a machine without being logically forced back to that very belief in teleology, in a personal designer or designers, which the mechanistic philosophy was intended to exclude.

But, as Mr. Paine well says, Mark Twain did not live by his philosophy. One appeals from the thinker to the man. Clemens's whole life proves that man is not fundamentally and incurably selfish. His never-ending spontaneity of wit, his genius and loving-kindness, cannot by any logic be squared with his theoretical fatalism. Of the many recorded facts that might be brought to prove this, let it suffice to refer to the fashion in which, when already an elderly man, he assumed the entire burden of the debt incurred by his bankrupt business enterprise. His creditors would gladly have accepted a composition which, while depriving them of part of their due, would have spared him infinite labour and trouble. He insisted, however, upon paying in full; and, as we all know, traveled around the world, enduring the unspeakable drudgery of a prolonged lecturing tour, to earn the money. At the dinner of the Lotos Club, held to celebrate his return, the

toastmaster, Mr. Frank Lawrence, evoked great applause when he said, "We hail him as one who has borne great burdens with manliness and courage, who has emerged from great struggles victorious." Clemens characteristically replied as follows: "Your president has referred to certain burdens which I was weighted with. I am glad he did, as it gives me an opportunity which I wanted — to speak of those debts. You all knew what he meant when he referred to it, and of the poor bankrupt firm of C. L. Webster and Company. No one has said a word about those creditors. There were ninety-six creditors in all, and not by a finger's weight did ninety-five out of the ninety-six add to the burden of that time. They treated me well; they treated me handsomely. I never knew I owed them anything; not a sign came from them."

He might have said, if challenged, that it *pleased* him most to pay in full, whereas his creditors *pleased* themselves by not insisting upon payment. Since this pleasure was the strongest motive in each case, neither party was free or truly unselfish. But in that case, why was he praising his creditors? And what is meant by freedom? Clemens's reasoning always implies that freedom means power to jump out of your skin, to cease to be yourself; power to do acts which are not your own acts. He condemns all deeds as selfish because they are the doer's own and are those which the doer prefers to perform.

But the notion that in order to be free the self would need the power to become not-self, is surely question-begging. Who ever meant this by freedom? Is not a theory indefensible which needs such a definition to

sustain it? Freedom is the power to do what one sees ought to be done. That man would be free who, conceiving what his course ought to be, was able to overcome all the resistances, within himself and in the outer world, that hindered him from conforming his conduct to his standard.

Clemens's logic destroys his own conception that man is a machine, by showing that man is truly self-determined. It is fantastic psychology to strip off successively the mind, the will, the temperament and the motives from the self, and then represent all these as external determinants tyrannizing over the self. It is not that man *has* a mind; he *is* a mind. It is not that he *has* a will; he *is* a will. His motives are the self-engendered resultants of his mind and will. What Clemens calls the "interior master" or "the tyrant" is the true self. You may call it, if you will, the "transcendental ego." You may deny its existence, because you cannot identify it with any phase of your empirical ego. Please remember, however, that it is the "transcendental ego" which makes the denial of its own existence, and refuses identification with any one or all of its empirical manifestations. To say, then, that conduct originates with this inward tyrant is but to say that conduct is self-originated; which is the condition and the definition of freedom.

No man is perfectly or completely free. Freedom (as my lamented friend George Burman Foster used to say) is not a gift; it is an achievement. The whole of life is a struggle after freedom, in which the largest attained measure of victory has been gained by the human race. That we have attained it is not disproved by the fact that

we must needs work upon data supplied through the senses; it is proved by the fact that we respond in a myriad different ways to the solicitations of the sense-data.

But the best refutations of Mark Twain's gloomy doctrine are his own life, and the writings that were not produced under the influence of his philosophical nightmare. It is idle to tell us that the only boon for man is death, and then to give us *The Innocents Abroad*, *The Tramp Abroad*, *Roughing It*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Huckleberry Finn*. We feel that the real truth about Clemens was what he wrote to his friend Dr. Brown, in Edinburgh: "If there is one individual creature on all this footstool who is more thoroughly and uniformly and unceasingly *happy* than I am, I defy the world to produce him and *prove* him. In my opinion, he doesn't exist."¹

The note of Mark Twain's spirit, of his work and of his life, is the note of joy: a huge, abounding, all-engulfing joy that swallowed up, subdued and transformed all the sorrow that came into his life. One might, without irreverence, write on the flyleaves of his collected works, as the summary of their purpose and effect, the words of the fourth Gospel: "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

His passionate resentment of the suffering that came to others and to himself is the index of the exceptional happiness which he customarily enjoyed, and which furnished the background of his sorrow. When such a man tells us that it is a crime to bring children into the world, and that death is the only kindness, the only thing to hope

¹ Paine's *Mark Twain*, vol. i, p. 505.

for, we find ourselves asking in shocked surprise what would have happened if his parents had acted on this philosophy of collective suicide. How much poorer the world would be without his contribution to its joys! Would *he* have been willing to miss the adventure of life, the wonderful friendships, the years of blissful marriage, the inexpressible ecstasy of his relation to his children?

I have more than once heard persons who professed Mark Twain's philosophy admit that they could not apply it to life or justify their conduct in accordance with it. Does not this shatter the philosophy? A system that contradicts the most ordinary facts and fails to account for the most universal experiences cannot well be true. The wise course is to listen to the real Mark Twain — the man who testifies to his thorough and uniform and unceasing happiness, and substantiates his testimony by pouring his strong, abounding joy into those works by which he has substantially increased the joy of all the world.

But happiness is not the last word, not the true test. What of the far more sacred experiences, shot through with sorrow — such as the influence of the dead Olivia Clemens upon the life of her husband? His theory pronounced that life was to be measured by its result in happiness, and condemned because there was so much unhappiness. But had he been asked whether he would exchange the sacred sorrow of the memory of his dead wife for all the happiness his heart could imagine, we know that he would have answered, "A thousand times, No."

The worth of life, then, lies in things which are higher and holier and more precious than happiness. And we all

actually do value these things more, however much our philosophy may pretend that we do not. Thus the good of our lives outweighs all the ill; and to have known and loved a spirit like Mark Twain is "part of our life's unalterable good."

III

*SAMUEL BUTLER, THE MASTER SATIRIST*¹

(1917)

IT WAS not without much trepidation that I submitted, in response to the Club's kind invitation, a list of possible themes for this evening's paper. It seemed natural to anticipate that almost all the available subjects would have been long ago exhausted by an assembly of such relatively august antiquity as the Chicago Literary Club, and one, moreover, which has numbered and still numbers associates of such distinction and such catholicity of literary interest. The news, however, that no essay on any aspect of the manifold work of Samuel Butler had hitherto been contributed removed some part of the perplexity, while simultaneously it afforded a surprising verification of one's previous impression as to the slowness with which Butler's posthumous fame is extending itself. The Chicago Literary Club is not to be blamed for the fact that it has not previously studied Samuel Butler. England, with characteristic slowness, has but recently become aware of him, and this largely as a consequence of the strenuous advertising of him by Mr. Bernard Shaw. That gentleman, having lived for years upon a reputation

¹ A Paper read before the Chicago Literary Club.

for originality based very largely on his extensive appropriation of Butler's ideas, is now discharging a long overdue account by referring his readers to the fountain-head.

It is not easy to think of a parallel to the phenomenon of the contemporary neglect and posthumous fame of Butler; for the common impression that nations generally, and the English in particular, are unjust and ungenerous to literary men is simply a myth. Goldsmith, the stock case, was in fact quite generously rewarded; and, had he not been a man who would have outrun the constable on any income, he would have been well off years before he died, would have incurred no debts, and probably would have lived much longer. Butler's first book (not counting the slim volume published by his father in 1863) was a popular success, and it was never forgotten by his own generation. I can remember hearing of *Erewhon* for many years before I had heard of anything else from the same author's pen, and certainly long before the able publicity agent already referred to had inaugurated the Butler boom. The author admits in his *Note-Books* that he made a cash profit of £62 10s. 10d. on this first venture, of which he states that 3842 copies were sold. But with his subsequent works the tale was very different.

It is startling, from the point of view of the uninitiated, to realize that thirty years of the literary activity of an unmistakable genius, whose works are now selling by thousands wherever English is read, resulted in a net loss of over £1,000! — not an attractive prospect for those who may be thinking of embracing literature as a profession.

This, however, was the price which Butler paid for his soul; and, according to his own account, he never regretted the bargain. He had infinite fun and satisfaction in his work, and he seems never to have wavered in the belief that he would some time be recognized. He comforted himself with the reflection that a man's chances of neglect during his own time are in exact proportion to his originality. It is perhaps fortunate that this consoling falsehood has so much vitality; otherwise the lives of innumerable men who work as Butler worked, but never reach the belated fame that he has conquered, would be more full of bitterness than they are.

No adequate biography of our subject has yet been prepared. A catalogue of the chief incidents of his career, drawn up by his literary executor, is prefixed to his *Note-Books*. There is, further, the certainty that *The Way of All Flesh* is in large part autobiographical; but we do not know how large the part is. We have, too, the alleged critical study by Mr. Gilbert Cannan, which contains a number of good things about art in general and about Mr. Cannan's somewhat haughty estimates of the development of the English novel in particular, but singularly little about his professed subject. The fullest record so far is the biographical sketch, only 43 pages long, by Mr. Festing Jones, prefixed to the volume containing *The Humour of Homer* and other essays, published in 1914; of which the best that can be said is that its author promises in it a full memoir, to be published later on. That is certain to be interesting and valuable, for Butler's work proves him to have been a "character" of the most entertaining description. One gets a vivid impression of this erratic,

self-centred and rather crusty old bachelor as he drifts around the clubs of London and tours in search of the picturesque through Italy and Sicily, sustaining his self-respect by associating continuously with people not his intellectual equals, taking up fad after fad and fight after fight, often, one suspects, with the purpose rather of scoring off his opponents than of establishing his own case, and secreting out of his egotism and his irony a protective incrustation which rendered him immune to the icy neglect of his contemporaries. One is haunted by the fear that Butler's character would hardly improve upon fuller acquaintance. The very attitude of contemptuous if good-humored superiority towards mankind which makes of *The Way of All Flesh* and of the *Memoir of John Pickard Owen*¹ the literary delights they are, seems necessarily to imply personal qualities in the author which at close range must have been the reverse of delightful. Yet, in the absence of a biography, it would be unjust to say more than this, and may be unjust even to say so much.²

Butler's period is from 1835 to 1902. He was the son of a parson and the grandson of a bishop. After schooldays at Shrewsbury and college years at St. John's, Cambridge, he went in 1858 to London to prepare for ordination. He lived among the poor and did parish work as a kind of lay curate. While thus occupied he was led

¹ This Memoir forms an introduction to the ironical "defence" of Christianity called *The Fair Haven*. (New York: Kennerley, 1914.)

² I have left this paragraph unchanged, because the two-volume biography published by Mr. Jones in 1919 fully confirms my previous impressions. (1922.)

to doubt the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. In the pretended memoir of Pickard Owen he describes that gentleman as teaching a Sunday School class, and discovering through that experience that the baptized children were not a measurable improvement, either in manners or morals, to say nothing of mind, upon the unbaptized. Staggered by this result in his own class, he takes a census of the entire school, only to find the preliminary returns relentlessly borne out. He decides accordingly that baptismal regeneration is a frost, and that he cannot submit himself to the orders of a Church which teaches it.

His refusal to enter upon the family career probably created an awful storm. Whether the matter was complicated by any such scandal as that which is so vividly described in *The Way of All Flesh* we do not know, but the fact that the storm blew him away to New Zealand suggests the possibility that there may have been other causes of offence, besides his misgivings about the baptismal doctrine of the Church.

In New Zealand he ran a sheep-farm for a few years in the province of Christchurch. Out of this he managed to realize enough to insure him a moderate but sufficient income. He accordingly returned to London in 1864 and began that career of comfort-worshiping bachelorhood and irascible literary production which lasted for nearly forty years. But he did not intend to become a man of letters. His first project was to master the art of painting, and to this study he devoted a great deal of time and effort, without, however, attaining such success as to satisfy either himself or others. After convincing himself that this would not do, he turned to music, in which

again he succeeded only in becoming a somewhat cranky amateur. The chief result of his studies in this field was a conviction that there was no God but Handel, and that Samuel Butler was his prophet. In view of his general principles, I cannot think it uncharitable to suggest that this devotion to Handel was fifty per cent genuine and fifty per cent motivated by the desire for one more means of scoring off his contemporaries. He certainly held the faith that in his own time whatever was wrong, and that the mere fact of the Victorian era appreciating any writer or painter or musician or man of science was conclusive evidence that the object of its appreciation must be a fraudulent imposture, against which Samuel Butler was called to conduct a campaign of annihilation. The opinions he expresses of the work of Dickens and Tennyson are conclusive in this respect. No doubt there is much in Tennyson's ultra-respectability and unctuousity which is offensive to all of us, as well as to such a master of sardonic humour as the author of *Erewhon*. But nothing save prejudice, or — what is the same thing — malice, could blind a man of Butler's insight to the enduring beauty and grandeur of Tennyson in his truly poetical and non-laureatic moods. As to Dickens, I say defiantly that his humour is in its own kind as excellent as Butler's, and that in his own way he is as great a satirist as Butler, and far more effective; for the things that *he* satirized died of the wounds he inflicted, whereas those that Butler attacked are still flourishing, and likely long to remain so.

It is almost startling to learn, on the authority of his personal friends, that Samuel Butler was not related to either of his two great namesakes in literature. Some-

body once remarked of *Erewhon* that, if it had been a racehorse, "it would have been got by *Hudibras* out of *Analogy*."¹ Indeed, so wonderfully does Butler combine the qualities of these predecessors that one is tempted to think the denial of relationship must be an error. How, on the theory of heredity expounded in his own evolutionary books, can one doubt that he must have derived his blend of the satiric genius of the author of *Hudibras* with the keen, sceptical, analytic logic of the author of the *Analogy*, by physical as well as spiritual descent with modification? Coincidence of names by itself is nothing. So far as I am aware, the present Poet Laureate of England, and the distinguished British officer who is at this moment conferring with the General Staff of the United States, are innocent of all direct consanguinity with me, and consequently of all responsibility for my heresies and eccentricities. But if I should begin, suddenly and startlingly, to display poetic powers comparable with those of Mr. Robert Bridges, or military prowess like that of General Bridges, or—more amazing still—a combination of both, you would be justly tempted to suspect collusion among the grandparents. Certainly it is exceptional in the highest degree to find a perfect blend of two strongly marked types of mental excellence, each of a high and peculiar order, in a third man whose name is the same as that of the former two, and who, like both of them, is descended from an ecclesiastical family, with absolutely no connection of blood.

All the ideas about evolution and the Life Force that

¹ Essay "Quis Desiderio. . . ." in *The Humour of Homer*, p. 108.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has been proclaiming for the last eighteen years are (to put it with the utmost suavity and urbanity) cribbed straight from Butler, in whom Shaw found them before he had read Nietzsche. The only exception to this generalization is that Butler never taught that special piece of nonsense about the Superman, for which, I fear, there is no alternative but to hold Nietzsche responsible.

There is, no doubt, a good deal of truth in Butler's own impression that the reason for his unpopularity was his attack on two orthodoxies at once. He was even more persistent and ruthless in his crusade against the orthodoxy of science than in his tilting at the conventional theology. Against Charles Darwin he developed a keen personal grievance, as well as a theoretical hostility. In his early days in New Zealand, when *The Origin of Species* first came out, he had welcomed the book whole-heartedly, and praised it in the local press. For doing this, however, he was attacked by an anonymous writer whom he believed to be the Bishop of Wellington, and who made him feel small by demonstrating that the chief idea in Darwin's book had been anticipated by Erasmus Darwin, if not also by Buffon. At first he could not believe this; but, being thus set on the trail of those older writers, he found that it was actually the case. I have no proof, but I have a definite intuition, that it was this fact which engendered the bitterness against Darwin that led Butler to qualify himself for writing on the subject of Evolution in an anti-Darwinian sense.

To Butler's campaign on evolution I attach very high value, for several reasons. The question is not so much

whether he was right and Darwin wrong; — because, as a matter of fact, the differences between him and Charles Darwin were more apparent than real, and, but for the heat and venom that Butler brought into the controversy, a definition of evolution and its causes might doubtless have been framed to which both of them could have subscribed. It is against the neo-Darwinian doctrine, as elaborated in extreme logical form by Weismann, that Butler's contentions are really directed. My chief reason for esteeming Butler's work in this field is that he was, consciously and bravely, asserting the right of the layman to criticize the expert; not, indeed, in the details of his science, nor upon any points where direct experience or experiment is necessary, but in the large philosophical principles which the expert professes to extract from his work, though more commonly he begins by unconsciously reading them into it. The struggle over authority was by no means ended when Protestantism asserted itself against the Roman Church. We are always in danger, and never more so than now, of being bluffed and hoodwinked into the acceptance of systems of authority which, if allowed to triumph, would be more mischievous than ever was that of the Church. Within the last two years, I have myself been quite bitterly rebuked for daring to question the doctrines of Freud, and this explicitly on the ground that Freud is an expert and I am not; the implication being that I am bound to submit in silence, no matter what he may choose to propound. My answer was, and is, that on any question of fact requiring first-hand expert knowledge I naturally should not venture to pit my judgment against Freud's — or, rather, my ignorance

against his knowledge; but when, leaving the realm of facts, he betakes himself to the construction of a great edifice of theory, or rather of speculation, and then tries to offer this as though it were the inevitable outgrowth of scientific discoveries, any layman is entitled to oppose him. Now, this is what Butler did in the case of Charles Darwin's doctrine of natural selection, or evolution by accident. He admitted the high competence of Darwin as an observer of fact and a collector of evidence; but he maintained (and in my opinion rightly) that this kind of ability and equipment is not in itself a guarantee for the soundness of the results which the expert will reach when he attempts to formulate a philosophical interpretation of the facts he has accumulated.

As against the doctrine of natural selection, which cannot give, and (to do Darwin justice) did not profess to give, any account of the origin or cause of the variations upon which selection works, Butler put forward a doctrine the greater part of which he had discovered in Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck, and which, with little difficulty, he found himself able to read into Buffon. This is the doctrine that the cause of variation in plant and animal life is effort, purpose, struggle for higher adaptation to conditions, or for a bodily modification rendered necessary by change in the circumstances. The duck gets its web-foot by making, in the first place, the utmost possible use of the scrap of skin that it has between its toes. Continuous effort to adjust itself to the unfamiliar conditions of aquatic life develops this skin to some extent, just as exercise on the anvil develops the biceps of the blacksmith. The modification thus brought about by exercise

is transmitted through a series of generations, until it produces the fully webbed foot. In the same fashion, all the organs of the animal world have come about through will and design. Not, indeed, that Butler pretended that any primitive animal had a full foresight of the kind of organs towards which it was struggling; but he insists that it did develop its organs through exercising to the utmost advantage, in face of the requirements of any given situation, whatever rudiments of such organs it had been born with. The process is one of a vast accumulation of separate efforts, the progressive realization of multitudinous purposes. Let us illustrate by an analogy of the kind that Butler always delighted in. Every step in the development of the art of printing, from the hand-press of Gutenberg to the great rotary machines in our newspaper offices, has been designed; but none of the long series of designers ever saw, so to speak, more than an inch or two ahead of his nose. So when we say that the whole development was designed, we do not mean that any single mind designed it all, or that the earlier designers foresaw the final outcome of their efforts.

Thus, while Butler's evolutionism is through and through teleological, it differs *toto coelo* from the teleology of Paley and Thomas Paine and the older theologians generally. For what impressed Butler was the fact that, while design and purpose were present everywhere, they were always the design and purpose of a painfully limited and groping intelligence. He found no evidence of the work of an infinite or omnipotent agent.

On the subject of heredity, his theory, while in itself a daring speculation, is worked out with such fascinating

skill as to sound amazingly plausible. It is, in one word, that heredity and memory are convertible terms. The new organism, whether in the embryonic or post-natal state, is literally identical with its parents, and these in turn with theirs, and so back, by an infinite (or, properly speaking, indefinite) regression, to the hypothetical "first form" of life. Consequently, the germ, or impregnate ovum, or embryo, is simply repeating a performance which it has gone through an immeasurable number of times before. Hence its absolute familiarity with the circumstances, its perfect faith in its power to cope with them, and its serene procedure — always knowing precisely what to do next, and never at a loss.

The root of the argument is the fact that in our own experience memory tends to become unconscious in the exact proportion in which it tends to become perfect. Any complicated activity, such as piano-playing, writing, reading or talking, can only be done well when it can be done without conscious attention. We are therefore not justified in denying that the procedure of the unborn animal in building up its own body is guided by memory, simply because this memory is apparently (not certainly, but apparently) unaccompanied by consciousness.

The immediate response of the scientific men of Butler's day to this ingenious argument was to laugh it, if not out of court, at least as far towards the door as possible. But the whirligig of time is notoriously implacable, and the last few years have witnessed a tremendous move on the part of the experts themselves in the direction of what is really Butler's theory. Not to mention the fact that Bergson's doctrine of the *élan vital*, and the principles of

his criticism of the older evolutionism, are mainly Butler over again, we have in the Neo-Vitalists a very definite approach towards Butler's positions.

But, for our immediate purpose, Butler's doctrines of evolution are of interest chiefly as explaining some of the most ingenious and subtle points of his immortal satire. I doubt whether many of the first readers of *Erewhon* were able to detect all that is implied in the wonderfully witty chapters which he pretends to translate from the Erewhonian Book of the Machines.¹ The Erewhonians were a nation who had formerly attained to as high a development of scientific skill and mechanical invention as the Victorian English, but it had been pointed out to them by one of their philosophers that man, in creating the "mechanical kingdom," was creating his own successor; giving life, that is, to a power which would end by enslaving him. The outcome of the multiplication of machinery must be that man in time would come to stand to the machines as the dog and the sheep now stand to man. The vegetable world had foolishly given rise to the animal kingdom, only to be preyed upon, subjugated, and in large part destroyed by its own creature. Man, in Bergson's phrase, "bestrides animality" in the same fashion; and now, said the Erewhonian philosopher, he is creating a new world of mechanical life that can only end by treating him as the animals had treated the plants. The result of this philosophy was that the Erewhonians destroyed all their machinery and prohibited its manufacture for the future, so emphatically that Butler's hero on arriving in the country was thrown into prison for possessing a watch.

¹ *Erewhon*, chaps. xxiii-xxv. (New York: Dutton.)

The air of seriousness with which Butler develops this preposterous thesis, the way in which he talks of rudimentary organs in the bodies of machines, analogous to those in our own (pointing, when pressed for an instance, to the little protuberance at the bottom of the bowl of his tobacco-pipe); — his grave discussion whether the time might not come when we should “see a fertile union between two vapour-engines, with the young ones playing about the door of the shed”; and the solemn air of alarm with which he inquires, “Do not machines eat, as it were, by mannery?” — all this constitutes one of the most exquisite exercises of satiric wit in the English tongue. But its finest point is lost unless we realize the idea underlying it.

And the idea is this: According to the more rigorous of Charles Darwin’s followers, the whole development of animal life is an affair of the interaction of mechanical forces alone. What we call consciousness, will, effort and intelligence, are a sort of mirage. They have played no real part at all in bringing about our actual development. Consequently, the evolution of machinery is, on this hypothesis, a process strictly analogous to the evolution of organic life. The word “life” itself is quite as applicable to the steam-engine as it is to man, or, if you prefer, as inapplicable to man as to the steam-engine; for, in the case of man, the things that it connotes are, as just stated, illusory. There is therefore no alternative in logic between contradicting the Darwinians, by affirming that will, effort and intelligence have been the real causes of our own evolution, and admitting the insane position that the Erewhonian philosopher adopts regarding the machines.

Erewhon appeared in 1872, and the sequel in 1901. The difference between the two books is immense. After a first reading of *Erewhon Revisited*, I could not help exclaiming that here was one of the very rare instances in which a sequel was better than its predecessor. To correct this impression, however, all that one had to do was to go back and re-read *Erewhon*. The difference is that, while both are satires, the first is confined almost entirely to the ridicule of ideas and institutions *per se*, whereas the second is a novel, in which the ideas and institutions attacked are embodied in definite, clear-cut, and excellently drawn characters. The persons in the original *Erewhon* are the merest masks. They are, as the Irishman expressed it, just "stalking-horses to grind axes on." In the second book, however, Butler's right hand has gained in cunning, through the practice he has had in the interval in writing his pretended *Memoir of John Pickard Owen*, which is a novel in itself, and *The Way of All Flesh*.

Resisting the temptation to deal with the latter, which is one of the greatest novels in the language, let us at length turn more systematically to our specific subject-matter, by way of a remark on the two chief methods of satire.

The first is that of caricature. You take some real man or institution just as he or it is, and describe it, judiciously exaggerating its peculiarities and foibles, and omitting, as far as possible, every line by which it shades off into normality. This, of course, is the method of Dickens, who gives you a bundle of extravagances with a man wrapped up inside it; or, when he feels so disposed, without any man inside it. Jefferson Brick and Elijah Pogram

are of the latter type. They are simply names attached to collections of wild parodies of ideas, walking about at large. This is also the method of Butler's great spiritual ancestor, the author of *Hudibras*. That worthy knight is the distillation into a single impossible but living person of all the pedantries, hypocrisies, irreligiosities and *gaucheries* of Puritanism, without a trace of its equally real greatnesses and finenesses.

The second method of satire may be called that of parallelism. In this you substitute for the actual doctrines, codes and institutions of a class or a nation, an analogous set of palpable absurdities, and thereby induce the realization that the actual things at which you are glancing are themselves absurd. The latter is the method of Swift and Butler. We are in danger of forgetting that *Gulliver's Travels* is, in almost all its details, a scorching satire on the political, religious and social conditions of the England of Queen Anne and George I. We think of it as a book for children — which, like all supremely great books, it of course is; but it is far more a book for the maturest-minded of men, and, among them, for those few especially who know intimately the history of the time in which it appeared and the condition of society which it travesties.

Erewhon is the product of an intellect as keen as that of Swift, but tempered with a far more radiant and kindly humour. Butler is by conviction a member of the Church of Laodicea; and, in the very act of exposing the hypocrisies of his contemporaries, he quietly gives you to understand that hypocrisy has a very high place in his scheme of evolution, being, indeed, a quality without which

no real success in life is to be looked for. The whole of his work is a sermon on the text, "Be not righteous over-much"; or, as he puts it, with diabolical cleverness, in the inscription over the doors of the Provincial Deformatory in *Erewhon Revisited*:—

"When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is a little naughty and wrong, he will generally be found to have gained in amiability what he has lost in righteousness."¹

To say that this is meant seriously would be to endorse the delectable doctrine that the English have no sense of humour. But, while Butler is perfectly aware of what he is doing, and undoubtedly having "the time of his life" in doing it, he is nevertheless only putting into this parody a doctrine which he would have been prepared to express in serious form. A man's playfulness is not always to be taken at its face value; nor is it to be doubted that sometimes the extremes of levity and of earnestness share the common fate of extremes by meeting.

The average man is verily a bundle of contradictions: being parcel of that greater assemblage of contradictions and defiances of logic which we call nature. He is superficial and profound; he is logical and illogical; sincere and insincere; a lover of truth, yet willing rather to die than to part with his darling deceptions of himself and others. The character of Zimri is in large measure descriptive of us all: for are we not all

*Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
... Everything by starts and nothing long?*

¹ *Erewhon Revisited*, p. 153. (New York: Dutton.)

It has been the common mode of the satirist, from the days of Aristophanes down to our own, to pillory the average man simply by exposing what he is; — to set his inconsistencies and untruths over against his loudly asserted claim to logic and truthfulness; to expose his hypocrisies and flay him for being hypocritical; in short, to hold up to the mediocre mass their own mediocrity as a monstrosity. The novel note in Butler (and one is sometimes in doubt whether it is the dazzling pinnacle of his satire or the foundation-stone of his serious convictions) is to defend hypocrisy, inconsistency and superficiality.¹ There is, in Swift's *Tale of A Tub*, a wonderful passage in which it is maintained that we ought always to stay on the surface of things so far as possible, because their depths will never bear looking into. It is so precious, and so little known, that I cannot resist the temptation to quote it: —

“In the proportion that credulity is a more peaceful possession of the mind than curiosity, so far preferable is that wisdom which converses about the surface to that pretended philosophy which enters into the depth of things, and then comes gravely back with informations and discoveries that in the inside they are good for nothing. The two senses to which all objects first address themselves are the sight and the touch; these never examine farther than the colour, the shape, the size, and whatever other qualities dwell or are drawn by art upon the outward of bodies; and then comes reason officiously with

¹ See *The Way of All Flesh* and his works on Evolution, *passim*.

tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate that they are not of the same consistence quite through. Now I take all this to be the last degree of perverting nature; one of whose eternal laws it is, to put her best furniture forward. And therefore, in order to save the charges of all such expensive anatomy for the time to come, I do here think fit to inform the reader that in such conclusions as these reason is certainly in the right; and that, in most corporeal beings which have fallen under my cognisance, the outside has been infinitely preferable to the in: whereof I have been farther convinced from some late experiments. Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse. Yesterday I ordered the carcase of a beau to be stripped in my presence; when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected faults under one suit of clothes. Then I laid open his brain, his heart, and his spleen: but I plainly perceived at every operation, that the farther we proceeded we found the defects increase upon us in number and bulk: from all which, I justly formed this conclusion to myself, that whatever philosopher or projector can find out an art to solder and patch up the flaws and imperfections of nature will deserve much better of mankind, and teach us a more useful science, than that so much in present esteem, of widening and exposing them, like him who held anatomy to be the ultimate end of physic. And he whose fortunes and dispositions have placed him in a convenient station to enjoy the fruits of this noble art; he that can, with Epicurus, content his ideas with the films and images that fly off upon his senses from the

superficies of things; such a man, truly wise, creams off nature, leaving the sour and the dregs for philosophy and reason to lap up. This is the sublime and refined point of felicity, called the possession of being well deceived; the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves."

I do not remember that Butler anywhere quotes this, but he has either the passage or its purport constantly in mind. In his *Evolution Old & New* he advises any young writer who may be hard up for a theme to try his hand on a Philosophy of the Superficial.¹ His reason for this is not the heartbroken cynicism of Swift, but something as near to a philosophic conviction as he ever comes. Logic, he finds, always leads to the absurd; rational strictness is inapplicable to the vulgarly practical subtlety of life. We must worship both God and Mammon, because the two are mutually dependent. Ignore Mammon, and we shall not live; then God will want worshippers.

Erewhon, therefore, is, if you please, a grilling satire on the English people, their religion, their science, their politics, their universities, and all their works and ways; particularly on the doctrine that was fashionable at the moment in the scientific world. Yet, at the back of the satirist's mind, there is all the time the feeling that these absurd institutions could give, if they would honestly tell the truth about themselves, a very good justification of their existence. Nothing could be more grotesque than the legs of the stork or the neck of the giraffe; they are an offence alike to logic and aesthetics. But the way in

¹ *Op. cit.*, chap. xiii, p. 198. (Dutton's ed.)

which they have come into existence, and their practical "survival-value" (to use Lloyd Morgan's expression), are as complete a vindication of them as could possibly be desired. Butler hates humbug, though he can love *a* humbug. He pretends, indeed, to be furious with the men at the Colleges of Unreason in *Erewhon*, whom, in *Erewhon Revisited*, he develops into the characters of Professors Hanky and Panky, and the superb Dr. Downie, —

"Professor of Logomachy, and perhaps the most subtle dialectician in Erewhon. He could say nothing in more words than any man of his generation. His text-book on *The Art of Obscuring Issues* had passed through ten or twelve editions, and was in the hands of all aspirants for academic distinction. He had earned a high reputation for sobriety of judgment by resolutely refusing to have definite views on any subject; so safe a man was he considered that, while still quite young, he had been appointed to the lucrative post of Thinker in Ordinary to the Royal Family."¹

The company in which this worthy is introduced includes also "Mr. Principal Crank, with his sister Mrs. Quack; Professors Gabb and Bawl, with their wives and two or three erudite daughters." Yet Butler's ideal man would by no means have been Socrates or John the Baptist. Any martyr would have seemed to him a noisy, troublesome, self-conscious, absurdly aggressive person; and he would certainly have declared himself, at any *auto-da-fe*, much more willing to carry the fagots or kindle the flames than to furnish fuel for them.

¹ *Erewhon Revisited*, p. 88f.

Whenever, in *Erewhon* and its sequel, he describes his hero, who is himself, he takes care to make him a humorously contemptible person. What could wear more deliciously the air of *naïveté* than Mr. Higgs's determination to convert the Erewhonians to Christianity if they proved (as he suspects) to be the lost ten tribes of Israel, with a view to gaining much *kudos* in this world and a great deal more in the next; or, should they not be the missing tribes, to make as much money out of them as he could? And again in the sequel, how could the author satirize himself more whimsically, in view of his artistic aspirations, than by declaring that after making his dramatic exit from Erewhon in the balloon, he fell into evil times upon returning to England, and for a considerable period had to gain his livelihood by drawing pictures with coloured chalks upon the pavements? There is in Butler nothing of the self-righteous aloofness of some satirists. He does not pretend to be holier or wiser than those he is describing. His specialty is in being more conscious of what he is after, when he is after the very same things that the average man pursues, and in candidly admitting what others act upon in their lives, but deny with their lips.

Erewhon, of course, is Nowhere; and the names of the characters are for the most part simply the commonest English names spelt backwards. The gaoler's daughter is Yram: Higgs's host (just recovering from a severe attack of embezzlement) is Mr. Senoj Nosnibor. The professor at the College of Unreason is Mr. Thims. The customs of the country are sometimes an inversion and sometimes a mere parallel of the social idolatries, cruelties and absurdities of mid-Victorian England.

For example, in Erewhon, if you are ill, you are arrested and sentenced to a heavy term of imprisonment, if not to death. Nobody is permitted to indulge in such luxuries as consumption or typhus; even a cold in the head is by no means a negligible misdemeanour. If, on the other hand, you have had the misfortune to incur a malady in your morality, — if you have forged a cheque, embezzled a large sum of money, committed arson, or run away with your neighbour's wife — you are an object of sincere sympathy to all your friends. Should you be poor, you are sent to a hospital and cared for at the public expense; if otherwise, you call in a "straightener," just as we call a doctor, and submit yourself to his treatment. He will probably prescribe, for the more serious of such misfortunes, a diet of bread and water and a series of floggings; perhaps also a fine, to be handed over to the State, — not to your victim, for your victim will himself be liable to prosecution for the serious offence of *Misplaced Confidence*. One of the best things in *Erewhon* is the chapter headed, "Some Erewhonian Trials," especially the case of the young man "who was accused of pulmonary consumption, — an offence which was punished with death until quite recently."¹

Over-against this, we have the account of the treatment of Mr. Nosnibor for embezzling a large sum of money. All his friends leave cards upon him, and send him flowers and sympathy. He submits manfully to the rather rigorous discipline of the straightener, and, after the course of a dozen floggings, is convinced that he has fully recovered.

¹ *Erewhon*, pp. 112 ff. and 117.

The public judgment of the community being thus severe on ill health but tolerant of moral obliquities, persons who are really suffering from some bodily affliction conceal it, and allege a moral weakness as the cause of their condition. Thus the estimable but dyspeptic Mahaina, unable to obliterate the outward and visible signs of inward though physical indigestion, but aware that she will be sent to prison if the truth is told, is obliged to allege that these signs are the result of dipsomania.

Were it not that irony and satire presuppose a considerable amount of mental subtlety and insight in the reader as well as in the writer, one would feel tempted to say that this method of exposing the absurdities of our ordinary criminal procedure would be better than any amount of denunciation and stoking-up of indignation. All our criminal courts, at least until the day before yesterday, proceeded on the assumption that, no matter what a man's heredity and personal antecedents had been, his choice between good and evil courses of conduct was absolutely in his own power. The new sciences of criminology and psycho-pathology (to which some Chicagoans, like Dr. William Healy, have made contributions so distinguished that they are known and esteemed everywhere except in Chicago) are rapidly putting an end to this ferocious nonsense; but it will be long, one fears, before the irony of Butler will have lost its point. Granted that character and conduct are to a large extent in our power, so, equally, is our bodily health; and it is easy to conceive circumstances under which it would be right to punish a man for the sin of having consumption: to say nothing of the so-called "social disease." On the other hand, it

is no less certain that our character and conduct are in many important respects as much out of our own power as our health, or the bodily predispositions which render us obnoxious to contagion. One need not be a thorough-going materialist and determinist to appreciate Butler's point; — if only for the reason that he was nothing of the kind himself.

The chapter on the Musical Banks¹ is the one in which Butler turns his terrible weapon against the insincerities of conventional religion. These banks are places to which it is most respectable to go. You must, moreover, keep a small amount upon deposit in them, and you must have some of their currency always on view. You must carry a purse containing it, in such a way that it shall be visible to the passers-by. But this currency is not the real money of the country, and nobody ever dreams of offering or accepting it in the actual exchanges of business. The banks are all old and beautiful buildings (so like the churches in England that nobody could detect the difference between them); but they are rapidly declining in their hold over everybody except the women, being shot through with humbug, both among the cashiers and the customers. The real deity of the country is the great goddess Ydgrun. She is quite sincerely worshipped by almost everybody. And here comes in the most piquant acidity of Butler's humour. She is not only the goddess whom they actually do, but the one whom they really *ought* to worship. Her devotees live entirely happy and unembarrassed lives; and is not this the whole duty of man? What matters, then, that she dictates all sorts of follies? She works well in

¹ *Erewhon*, chap. xv.

practice; so that her worship has that pragmatic sanction which, with Butler, is all-important.

Into Butler's elaborate fantasy of the World of the Unborn, and their enmity to the living, I shall not have time to enter. It is a mixture of irony on the doctrine of Original Sin with a touch of realism, imparted by the application of Butler's own theory of evolution. But the cutting edge of the satire is his description of the Birth Formula which the new-born child is compelled to sign by proxy.¹ To elaborate the application of this to the practice of Infant Baptism and the baby's vicarious profession of acceptance of the Christian faith would be to insult your intelligence.

The chapters on the Colleges of Unreason are a hit not so much at university education in general as at that of Oxford and Cambridge in particular. And in this respect they would doubtless be a huge delight to Mr. Abraham Flexner and the rest of our utilitarian opponents of the humanities; the difficulty, however, from their point of view, being that it is only the kind of education they despise which produces the ability to satirize it in Butler's fashion. The chief study in these colleges is one "which,"

¹ The "Birth Formula" states that the child coerced his parents to bring him into the world, that he is solely responsible for his physical defects, etc., and that he appeals to their generosity not to kill him. "Some one of the friends comes forward and undertakes to sign the document on his behalf, feeling sure (so he says) that the child would do it if he only knew how, and that he will release the present signer from his engagement on arriving at maturity. The friend then inscribes the signature of the child at the foot of the parchment, which is held to bind the child as much as though he had signed it himself." — *Erewhon*, p. 187.

says Butler, "I can only translate by the word 'hypotheticals.'" Many years are devoted to the mastering of the hypothetical language, after which the youths are placed under the tutelage of the Professor of Worldly Wisdom. The chief business of the colleges is to suppress all originality, which is regarded as an insult to the unoriginal man. Progress is a nuisance, and therefore must not be permitted except in such small doses as are absolutely unavoidable and so obvious as to command universal assent. A man's business is not to think for himself; it is rather to think as his neighbours do, or at least as they find it expedient to say they do. Woe be to him if he calls good what they call evil, or *vice versâ*! It is really remarkable, when one comes to think of it, that Oxford and Cambridge should deserve this kind of treatment as thoroughly as they do, and yet have produced so many wonderful men, like Butler, capable of administering it to them.

Erewhon ends with its hero's escape in a balloon, accompanied by the girl whom he had persuaded to elope with him. Butler either foresaw when writing *Erewhon* the glorious chance this opened for a sequel, or, at all events, his imagination began to play upon the possibility shortly after he had finished the book. The whole plan of *Erewhon Revisited*, written thirty years later, is the working out of this possibility. Whatever he may ironically pretend to the contrary, *Erewhon Revisited* is, and was meant to be, an attack upon the Church, or rather upon what Butler considered its outworn dogmas, and, still more, upon the insincerity of those preachers in it who are in fact complete unbelievers, but for worldly

ends profess to believe with the mob. Butler's point is this: Let a single miracle happen, or rather let any one natural event be believed to be a miracle, and what must necessarily follow? Why, the complete disorganization of the mind of the nation that believes it. Hitherto they have had a clear idea (not, perhaps, philosophically or rationally justified, but justified by its practical working power) of what is possible and what is not; and, in accordance with this, all their institutions are built up. Destroy that standard, and you will open the door to every kind of mental perversion and foolish innovation.

Immediately after Higgs's departure from Erewhon, the story of his balloon ascent (a thing unprecedented in Erewhonian experience) was magnified into a first-class miracle. The balloon had been met in mid-air by a celestial chariot and horses, into which Higgs, now apotheosized into the only child of the Sun-God, is transported with his bride for conveyance heavenwards. The miracle was speedily followed by a heavy flood of rain, thus breaking up the drought that had long prevailed, fulfilling Higgs's promise, and confirming the faith of the multitude both in the miraculous nature of his exit and in his influence with the gods. The result is that by the time he returns, twenty years later, he finds that he has been made the founder and object of a new cult. All his sayings have been carefully collected and written up into a sort of text-book of sacred scripture. Most of them have undergone a perversion similar to that of the righteous man turning away from his righteousness, which I quoted in an earlier page. Those that have not been thus transmogrified have been carefully explained away by the

professors at the Colleges of Unreason, who, though they do not believe in the new cult, have found it expedient to pretend that they do, in order to become its heads and to gain the resulting prestige and wealth. For instance, Higgs had often been heard to repeat the Lord's Prayer, and the phrase therefrom, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," has been changed by the new ecclesiastics to read, "Forgive us our trespasses, but do not forgive them that trespass against us"; — on the ground that the authentic form, being obviously impracticable and beyond human nature, could not have been intended by the beneficent Founder of the new faith. The whole book is a daring attack upon the Church of England, or rather upon spiritual humbug in high places; and only those whose appetite is robust enough to tackle such a diet can be advised to read it.

Pending the publication of Mr. Festing Jones's *Life of Butler*, we shall not be able to solve the problem as to whether Butler's childhood was really so unhappy as he often seems to imply that it was.¹ Many of the things recorded of Ernest in *The Way of All Flesh* are admittedly autobiographical, but there is nothing clearly known which could justify us in supposing that Butler's parents were really such revolting creatures as Theobald and Christina. This question has its interest as bearing on Butler's own character. One cannot help feeling that if Theobald and Christina are really meant for his own father and mother, he must have been an unmitigated and indescribable cad.² Even his leaving open the door

¹ [Nor can we, now that it is published.]

² [They were; he was.]

to such a construction, and adding colour to it by withholding the novel from publication during his lifetime, is a not readily pardonable offence against the sacred intimacies of life and the rights of the defenceless dead. But, be this as it may, there can be no doubt that he had thoroughly adopted the gospel of Laodicea to which Ernest settles down, but which he nevertheless satirizes the Erewhonians for constructing out of the perverted "Sayings of the Sun-Child." His habit, too, of blending earnestness with fun and his own secret meaning with mockery, is shown in the collection of these Sayings which he describes as being read at the dedication of the temple to himself, at which he was present incognito.¹

The last half-dozen of these sentences contain Butler's own ripest and most sacred convictions. He had come to believe in God, not as a manlike being distinct from the world, but as the Force of the ascending effort in the universe itself. His doctrine is not unlike that preached by

¹ "We approach [God] most nearly when we think of Him as our expression for Man's highest conception of goodness, wisdom and power. But we cannot rise to Him above the level of our own highest selves.

"We remove ourselves most far from Him when we invest Him with human form and attributes. . . .

"The universe is instinct with the mind of God. The mind of God is in all that has mind throughout all worlds. There is no God but the Universe, and man, in this world, is His prophet.

"God's conscious life, nascent, so far as this world is concerned, in the infusoria, adolescent in the higher mammals, approaches maturity on this earth in man. All these living beings are members one of another, and of God.

"If we speak ill of God in our ignorance it may be forgiven us; but if we speak ill of His Holy Spirit indwelling in good men and women it may not be forgiven us." — *Erewhon Revisited*, p. 192f.

Socrates in Plato's *Republic* and by John Stuart Mill in his *Essay on Theism*, and in the last year or so snatched up, as though it were a novelty, by Mr. H. G. Wells; — the doctrine of God as a power neither infinite nor omnipotent, but wholly good, and indomitable; and therefore destined to attain supremacy in the triumph of righteousness. In the chapter appended to *Evolution Old & New*, Butler describes himself as a Pantheist; but this term does not accurately characterize the view he expressed many years later in these sentences that I have just read to you. For, in this later view, God is by no means the Whole of things; He is the Struggler: and, on Butler's own repeated showing, the Struggler is neither identical with that against which He struggles, nor yet, in strictness, a product of it. Whether this doctrine is metaphysically sound would be a question too grave for our present consideration. I therefore merely record, without attempting to justify, my conviction that it is not.

Lest, however, you should apprehend that I intend at the close to land you in a Serbonian bog of Hegelian or Bradleian dialectics, let us end our citations from Butler with a poem not contained in the two volumes of great satire which furnished the text, or rather the pretext, for the present essay. The lines entitled *A Psalm of Montreal* are now to be found in *The Note-Books of Samuel Butler*, though they originally appeared elsewhere; — I cannot recall precisely where, but I certainly knew them a good many years before *The Note-Books* were printed. You will, I think, with me, detect in them the very life of Butler's irony, the very principle out of which his whole satirical output evolved itself. He alleges that they are founded upon an actual incident:

*Stowed away in a Montreal lumber-room
The Discobolus standeth and turneth his face to the wall;
Dusty, cobweb-covered, maimed and set at naught,
Beauty crieth in an attic and no man regardeth:
O God! O Montreal!*

*Beautiful by night and day, beautiful in summer and
winter,
Whole or maimed, always and alike beautiful —
He preacheth gospel of grace to the skin of owls
And to one who seasoneth the skins of Canadian owls:
O God! O Montreal!*

*When I saw him I was wroth and I said, "O Discobolus!
Beautiful Discobolus, a Prince both among gods and men!
What doest thou here, how camest thou hither, Discobolus,
Preaching gospel in vain to the skins of owls?"
O God! O Montreal!*

*And I turned to the man of skins and said unto him, "O
thou man of skins,
Wherefore hast thou done thus to shame the beauty of
the Discobolus?"
But the Lord had hardened the heart of the man of skins
And he answered, "My brother-in-law is haberdasher to
Mr. Spurgeon."*

O God! O Montreal!

*"The Discobolus is put here because he is vulgar —
He has neither vest nor pants with which to cover his
limbs;*

*I, Sir, am a person of most respectable connections —
My brother-in-law is haberdasher to Mr. Spurgeon."*

O God! O Montreal!

Then I said, "O brother-in-law to Mr. Spurgeon's haberdasher,

*Who seasonest also the skins of Canadian owls,
Thou callest trousers 'pants,' whereas I call them
'trousers,'*

Therefore thou art in hell-fire and may the Lord pity thee!"

O God! O Montreal!

"Preferrest thou the gospel of Montreal to the gospel of Hellas,

The gospel of thy connection with Mr. Spurgeon's haberdashery to the gospel of the Discobolus?"

Yet none the less blasphemed he beauty, saying, "The Discobolus hath no gospel,

But my brother-in-law is haberdasher to Mr. Spurgeon."

O God! O Montreal!

That "brother-in-law of Mr. Spurgeon's haberdasher," who thinks the Antinous and the Discobolus "rather vulgar" because they are trouserless, may fitly stand as the incarnation of mid-Victorian philistinism, the quintessence of grundified provincialism. But even to him we owe a debt of gratitude; for where would the satirist be without his butt? In *Erewhon Revisited*, Butler has humorously insisted that a large number of thieves must be necessary to society, in order that their falling out may give to hon-

est men a chance to come by their own. In the same spirit, let us acknowledge our indebtedness to all the angular, stupid, insincere, but in general inoffensive humbugs, the Stig-ginses and Pecksniffs, who unwittingly contribute to the perennial feast of delight provided for us by the great satirists of the world; among whom, in English literature, Samuel Butler will always retain a place in the highest rank, sharing the otherwise solitary niche of Swift.

IV

GEORGE ELIOT: A CENTENARY TRIBUTE

(1919)

TO CONFESS a taste for the Victorians is, in the eyes of our modernity worshippers, a damaging self-betrayal. The young Olympians of Greenwich Village and its analogues have so high a scorn for Browning and Tennyson that they never read them, being convinced that these older luminaries have paled their ineffectual fires before the greater light of Miss Lowell, Mr. Masters and Mr. Lindsay. Swinburne, for them, is but "the shadow of a name." A love for Dickens is a confession of vulgarity. Thackeray and George Eliot, who believed in morality, and said so in their novels, thereby committed a rustic gaucherie which dooms them for ever to outer darkness.

Yet there are still some strayed revellers from the nineteenth century, belatedly haunting its forsaken banquetting boards, who feel about this prevailing fashion as they feel about the confessed preference of the Queen Anne men for Pope and Congreve over Spenser and Shakespeare. Such lovers of the old are not blind to the merits of contemporaries. They are well aware that in Masfield and Lindsay, and many others, we have authentic poets, and that on both sides of the ocean our

language is being enriched with a wealth of noble fiction and drama, much of which will deservedly obtain the attention of the next ages. Yet they feel that to throw out the sifted best of fifty years ago, while accepting *en masse* the unscreened product of the hour, is at once to betray shallowness and to incur serious loss.

The life of George Eliot, which ran from November 22, 1819, to December 22, 1880, covers the growing and creative decades of the Victorian Age. This was a period of great industrial change, of advance in political democracy, of scientific progress, of religious awakening, of outstanding excellence in poetry, fiction and many other departments of literature.

To realize the greatness of this period, one needs but to recall a few of the people with whom George Eliot was contemporary. Whitman and Lowell were born in the same year with her; as were also her fellow-countrymen Ruskin and Kingsley. She was the contemporary of Lincoln and Disraeli, of Gladstone, Bright and Cobden, of Emerson, Holmes and Hawthorne, of Dickens and Thackeray, Tennyson and Browning, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, Macaulay, Carlyle, Darwin and Huxley — to mention only a few of the most eminent in the English-speaking nations, while ignoring the huge list of first-rate names that would have to be enumerated if one glanced at Continental Europe.

About the royal lady who names this epoch Mr. Zangwill (or another) has vented the witticism that she was "frightfully early Victorian." What is it that we so dislike in the period on which we paste this dyslogistic label? Obviously nothing peculiarly British, since the bad taste

is raised by the term in American and European mouths as well. It is something characteristic of an age rather than of any one country. It meets the eye and affronts the taste in France, Germany and America, as well as Britain. Indeed, France, during the pinchbeck empire of Napoleon III, synthesizes its objectionableness perhaps more completely than any other land.

The Victorian age was, in the first place, the age of the industrial revolution, which worked itself out under the extremest notions of individualism and *laissez-faire*, and under the illusion that a divine collective unselfishness could be juggled from the summation of individual selfishnesses. Thus the industrial revolution made a scene of physical and moral horror in every land it affected. Yet it is not alone the uglification of countrysides, the befouling of atmospheres with coal-smoke, and the building of "cities of dreadful night" like England's Manchesters and our Pittsburghs, that gives the distinctively unpleasant flavour to the word "Victorian." Nor is it alone our sense of indignation at social injustice, the tyranny of the machine, and the sacrifice of man to the industrial Moloch, that the word "Victorian" awakens. It is a twinge of the aesthetic nerve, a setting on edge of the teeth of taste, as well as a pain in the conscience.

The age was the age of the bourgeoisie. The British aristocracy surrendered its political control to the middle classes in 1832, at the same time emancipating Catholics and Jews and setting free those many forms of doubtful taste in religion that England calls "Protestant Dissent." Thus, the tone of the age was set by classes without standards. The grace and grandeur of the aristocratic time

were passing; the new age had not yet attained grandeur or grace. The successful class was parvenu; and it was the extravagances wreaked by its frantic money-power that stamped the period with its evil features. It is Victorianism's execrable taste in architecture, furniture, clothing, pictures, and machine-made substitutes for the products of the older handicrafts, that occasions our shuddering. Fortunately, literature in large measure escaped the prevalent blight. Its main stream, at all events, was not befouled; for the class that made the new plutocracy, and wrote it up or down, had never been so far to seek in literary standards as in the other arts.

Unluckily, we are still without a satisfactory biography of George Eliot. Sir Leslie Stephen, in his monograph in the "Men of Letters Series," is far from being at his best; he discharges a seemingly unloved task with bored and condescending conscientiousness. Mr. Cross's three volumes, entitled *Life and Letters*, are mere scissors and paste among her papers, — the scissors being used much more for concealment than disclosure. Writing as he did on the morrow of her death, Cross doubtless had valid reasons for his reticence; but surely now, after forty years, the full story of George Eliot might well be given to the world.

Yet although our curiosity as to many of her experiences must for the present remain unsatisfied, we shall never get a finer picture of the general aspects of the life she knew than her novels supply. The principal fact about her father, Robert Evans, is that he suggested to George Eliot the characters of Adam Bede and Caleb Garth. He was a man of obsolete ideas; — holding, for instance, the

quaint, old-world superstition that whosoever accepted a day's wage was bound, by a thing called honour, to render a day's service in return for it. He had contempt for any man who professed to do a thing that he had not qualified himself to do. He was impatient of slackness and of such conspiracies for avoiding work as are now in fashion. His opinions would provoke to laughter any assemblage in a modern stock exchange or trade union; and even in his day such fast-failing heresies restricted him to a slender measure of what the world calls success.

His fifth and last child, Mary Ann Evans, was brought up in the country, and later amid a small-town life, the lineaments of which live pleasantly in the memory of readers of the *Scenes from Clerical Life*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Adam Bede*, and *Middlemarch*. At twenty-one she went with her widowed father to live in Coventry, where she became the intimate friend of two families (the Brays and Hennells) who had broken with the traditional dogmas of Christianity. The result of this contact was the speedy eradication from George Eliot's mind of the creed she had been taught and had hitherto striven with considerable fervour to reduce to practice. The upheaval did not lead to family disaster, though, for a moment, her refusal to accompany her father to church threatened a separation between them. One of those compromises characteristic of the English (though unheard of among us) was arrived at: she went with him to church, and he abstained from inquiry into her opinions of the creed and the sermon. It was at this time that she accepted her first martyrdom — the translation into English of the *Leben Jesu* of Strauss. This was a grilling task for her, with

her limited knowledge of German, her intense conscientiousness and her endless quest for accuracy. But the discipline bore its valuable fruit in her later literary style.

After her father's death in 1849, she spent some months in Switzerland. Returning to England, she went to London and became assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*, then in its palmy days as the leading British organ of liberal religious and political opinion. It had been founded by the Benthamite party, and was the mouth-piece of their school. This work brought her into intimate contact with an interesting circle: Herbert Spencer, Grote, the Carlyles, Froude, Harriet Martineau, Francis Newman, and, in particular, George Henry Lewes.

The version which the world has accepted of Lewes's domestic infelicities (and against which there seems to be no strong evidence) is that his wife had betrayed and deserted him, uniting herself with another man. At that time, divorce in England was obtainable only by having a special Act of Parliament passed for each individual case. None but the wealthiest and those of greatest political influence could obtain it. Out of love for Lewes, compassion for his misfortune, and resentment of this indefensible state of the law, George Eliot united herself with him in 1854, and they lived together in perfect companionship until his death in 1878. Early in 1880 she married Mr. J. W. Cross, a man much younger than herself, who greatly admired her and wished to take care of her; but her death in December of the same year ended their happy companionship.

These two episodes, — the loss of her traditional faith and her irregular union with Lewes, — reflect the spirit

of revolt that was characteristic of the time: and it is with regard to them and their consequences to her that fuller biographical disclosure is to be desired.

As to the first, one cannot hesitate to recognize that it was a blessing to her, and, through her work, to the world. For that early creed of hers was a rather cabined evangelicism, within the bounds of which a spirit like hers could never have reached anything like normal development. In the lives of some of her neighbours, undoubtedly, she saw Christianity at its noblest; but not in their creed. And in too many even of the lives what she saw was a grossness and animality inconsistent even with the most unspiritualized forms of Christianity. She knew people who suggested to her the characters of Dinah Morris, Dorothea Brooke, Mr. Farebrother, Mr. Tryan and the like; but she also met the prototypes of Dempster, Bulstrode and Casaubon.

Now if we are to say of these undesirables that they were bad in spite of their creed, justice will constrain us to add that it was also in spite of their creed that her nobler characters achieved and manifested their goodness. For the creed in question prescribed the worship of a God modelled on the Eastern despot, who most unethically held his children guilty of the sin of their first ancestor, and then absolved them from its consequences by quite immorally accepting the vicarious sacrifice of an innocent third party. On its practical side, this creed was chiefly concerned to make, in commercial fashion, the best of the rather corrupt bargain thus offered. To escape hell-fire, to secure the advantages of Christ's atonement, and to assure oneself the fullest obtainable measure of the felicity

of heaven, meantime getting out of this life the utmost possible degree of pleasure and selfish advantage consistent with these objects—such was the Christianity of the common run of people of George Eliot's time. Clearly, whoever felt the need for spiritual religion of any kind had first to escape from this in one direction or another. Now, while Newman and those he influenced sought to escape by retreating to the fifteenth century, George Eliot, with multitudes of others, went forward into an agnosticism which at least served the purpose of enabling them to pause, take stock of the situation, and look around for the direction in which a positive and satisfying philosophy might most hopefully be sought.

It will seem regrettable to many now that the only refuge available for a spirit like George Eliot's should have been this rather arid agnosticism of the mid-nineteenth century, which was giving the world copious information about the Unknowable, but making serious oversights regarding some of the most important matters within the sphere of the Knowable. There is pathos in the spectacle of her fine spiritual nature fighting against the glaring insufficiencies of a philosophy to which, as a matter of intellectual honour, she had submitted her mind, but which could neither feed her soul nor account for or direct its noblest inspirations.

The clearest fact about George Eliot is her intensely religious nature. This it was which occasioned her revolt against the unethical creed and life of her time. So has it been with all the great religious innovators of the world. The commonplace notion that people run away from creeds in order to liberate their self-indulgence from

galling restrictions is, in the best cases—nay, in the majority of cases—a complete inversion of the truth. One must have been self-indulgent indeed to find unendurable restraint in a Church in which Lawyer Dempster could be an office-holder.

George Eliot's profound insight into and sympathy with the unaffected religion and genuine spiritual life of unsophisticated people has led many to suppose either that she did not revolt completely against the creed of her childhood, or that she recanted her heresies. But neither of these things is true. When she broke with sectarian Christianity, she did so completely and finally; and she never took a step back towards the creed that she had left. Her letters, her novels (to those who can read), and the essays, both of her middle life and last years, afford clear proof of this. It is true that she was always groping for a fuller and more satisfactory faith than she enjoyed, but she never sought it in any return towards the dogmas she had abandoned.

In this connection, one may refer to the admirable essay on "Evangelical Teaching" which she contributed to the *Westminster Review* in 1855 and had republished at the end of her days. It is in several ways a model of what rationalistic criticism should be—temperate, restrained; charitable, even generous, to her opponent; adequately informed; yet fired throughout with an intense ethical condemnation of the fierce and unholy dogmas currently preached in the name of the Prophet of Nazareth. For these reasons, it still makes edifying reading; but I appeal to it here, and to the fact that she deliberately arranged for its republication at the end of her days, to show that

her severance from the faith of her childhood was never repented.

The false impression which the public has about this matter is, of course, due to the loveliness of the evangelical characters in George Eliot's novels. No zealot of Low Anglicanism could imagine or desire a nobler example of the fruits of that system than the Rev. Edgar Tryan. No devotee of Methodism could wish to see the kind of character it can produce in an uninstructed girl more lovingly conceived and exquisitely portrayed than in the picture of Dinah Morris.

But this is the insight of genius and the splendid truthfulness of a mind wholly free from sectarian bias. The difference between George Eliot and the ordinary free thinker was that she could and did think, and, when thinking, she was really free — free from prejudice. The trouble with many who claim to be free thinkers is that too often they are as unable to see the truth about their orthodox neighbours as these are to see the truth about them.

There is a saying of Renan to the effect that a man could only write the history of a religion that he had first believed and afterwards rejected. It may well be hoped that this is not true; for if it be, how are we ever to understand extinct religions, or systems so foreign to our Western spirits as Mohammedanism and the great Oriental faiths? Yet the double qualification was a great advantage to George Eliot. It enabled her to do sublime justice to the nature and fruits of that local and provincial phase of Christianity which she had outgrown.

For her, as for many others, the loss of creed meant a

finding of faith — faith in man and in the indefinable, pervasive Good out of which the gods are made. It has been said that sometimes “the heart lives by the faith the lips deny.” It was not wholly so with George Eliot. Yet there was a fortunate and shining inconsistency between her religious estimate of man and the worth of human life, and the philosophy which her intellect had been constrained to embrace. She says in the Proem to *Romola*, “The human soul is hospitable, and will entertain conflicting sentiments and contradictory opinions with much impartiality.” This is fortunate, in view of the bankruptcy to which we should all be condemned were we compelled to jettison every fragment of our mental and spiritual cargo, except the tiny bits that will precisely dovetail with each other.

George Eliot’s philosophy tended to be one of mechanistic naturalism. It was headed for the reduction of man to mere animality, and for the banishing of all traces of mind, purpose and freedom from the universe. That on this basis ethics, in the proper sense, became impossible; that morality lost its heart and spring by being degraded to a calculus of self-regarding individual prudence, was clear to her intuition, though she could not see her way to escaping intellectually from a view of life and the world that entailed these consequences.

She lived, then, by a faith, admittedly indemonstrable, in “the angel heart of man.” There is a phrase in *Daniel Deronda*, “the insistent penetration of suppressed experience.” Its date will save this phrase from being interpreted in the exquisite sense of the Freudians. Now, George Eliot’s heart was insistently penetrated by an ex-

perience of elements in man and the world which her philosophy could not account for, and accordingly sought to suppress. No Platonic or Christian moralist ever insisted more earnestly than she on the duty and joy of self-sacrifice, on the binding character of right, irrespective of consequences; on the ineffectiveness of self-regarding motives for spiritual morality, or on the reality of the over-arching, universal good that somehow reaches the soul that lies open to it. This is why she incurred the abuse of Nietzsche. He was right to see in her an enemy, and to detect some measure of inconsistency between her philosophic postulates and her moral valuations. But some of us, while admitting the logical ground for Nietzsche's stricture, will be obstinately grateful to George Eliot for holding to a necessary truth even at the sacrifice of formal consistency.

Nietzsche's point is that she had no right to retain what he called Christian ethics, while abandoning the theology which was its foundation. But the essentials of "Christian ethics" — the ascription to man of such intrinsic worth as one cannot attribute to any mere product of nature, and the doctrine that life is to be found by losing it — are neither exclusively Christian nor necessarily dependent upon a theological philosophy for justification. In Christianity, as a simple matter of history, the ethics is not a product of the theology. It is an independent and original insight; the theology is an afterthought to explain it. Those who cannot accept the afterthought are under no constraint to abandon the insight. It is open to them to seek another and a more rationally satisfying explanation.

George Eliot sees that the good done in the name of theological systems is really independent of them and due to the splendid humanity of the finer type of people in their influence on others. The whole point of the wonderful story of *Janet's Repentance* is that it was Tryan the man, with the insight born of his own sin and repentance, not Tryan the sectarian, who was able to save Janet's soul. With the same nature and experience, but without a touch of his evangelical theology, he would have had the same power; without the nature and experience, his theology would never have given it to him. If any reader is disposed to quarrel with this view, let him consider the influence of the child on Silas Marner and of Daniel Deronda on Gwendolen Harleth. That of Savonarola on Romola is perhaps as open to varying interpretation as the case of Janet and Tryan; but he is a poor reader of George Eliot who cannot see the lesson she is seeking to enforce. Her view is the one expressed by Professor Schmidt in his noble work, *The Prophet of Nazareth*: "It is the touch of man that heals." There is a divine power in the world; but it works only through human instrumentalities. If you must needs insist on explaining Christ's influence over the Magdalenes and tax-grafters by saying that Christ was God, some of us will be ready to accept the explanation, provided you will also admit that every man or woman who produces a like effect on a Janet Dempster, or a Romola or Gwendolen, is also *in so far* God. The terminology is of slight importance. What matters is our recognition of the nature of that highest human influence which produces such effects, and its identity wherever it appears. This was the truth George Eliot strove to enforce.

We talk of the mystery of evil; and a mystery it truly is. But is not the greatest of its puzzles the fact that it sometimes becomes the means to a good unattainable without it? If Edgar Tryan can save Janet's soul, it is because he has done an evil greater than hers. The fact that he has risen to newness of life out of such a spiritual death enables her to conceive the possibility of her own redemption; and seeing this to be possible, she discovers, latent in herself, the strength to make it actual.

Now, nobody can say that George Eliot acted from any evil motive in her union with Lewes. Her purpose, beyond all question, was holy and irreproachable. But one may nevertheless hold that she fell into an error of moral judgment. The matter cannot here be discussed. It must suffice to hint at the certain consequences that would have ensued had the union not fortunately proved childless. Consequences to offspring are the utilitarian test of all proposed solutions of the problem of the union of the sexes.¹

Yet it is possible, while thinking that wrong judgment was shown, to feel the profoundest respect for the courage evidenced, and sympathy with the conflict and sorrow entailed, by such a step as George Eliot took. No doubt the English law at the time was intolerable. Yet it is not cowardice but rational prudence to stick to what T. H. Green calls "the rule of common sense," — that in a constitutional country one should conform to a bad law until

¹ Any reader interested in my views of the problem of marriage and divorce is referred to an Essay on "Ellen Key and the 'New Morality' of Free Love," in my *Criticisms of Life*. (Houghton, Mifflin, 1915.)

it can be changed by constitutional methods. A protest by Lewes and George Eliot would have had greater dignity and effect if they had not broken the unjust law.

But be that as it may, their union was to themselves a real blessing, whatever its effect on their relations with others or its influence in the way of example. They seem to have been an admirably assorted pair; and they were assuredly more faithful to the vow they had not made than many who make it. Nor can we doubt that it was personal experience that produced in George Eliot her profound sense of the native, inherent sanctity of social bonds and human faith. As she puts it in the *Spanish Gypsy*:

*The sanctity of oaths
Lies not in lightning that avenges them,
But in the injury wrought by broken bonds,
And in the garnered good of human trust.*

With this may be coupled the passionate outburst of Romola against Tito when he proposes to sell the library of her dead father, which they had pledged themselves to him to retain:

“You talk of substantial good, Tito! Are faithfulness, and love, and sweet grateful memories, no good? Is it no good that we should keep our silent promises, on which others build because they believe in our love and truth? Is it no good that a just life should be justly honoured? Or is it good that we should harden our hearts against all the wants and hopes of those who depended on us? What good can belong to men who have such souls? To talk cleverly, perhaps, and find soft couches for themselves, and

live and die with their base selves as their best companions."

Another result of her relation with Lewes was the stimulus to her creative activity provided by his discriminating encouragement. He was a hard taskmaster to himself, as is shown by his large literary output and the multitude of his fields of study. There is little doubt that his example and her own high conscientiousness in craftsmanship led George Eliot to serious over-exertion. We who read her books without thought of the conditions of their production, may feel more grateful to Lewes than we should have done had we seen the effect of his over-stimulation upon her. Each of her novels was born of pain. Her health, never robust, became chronically unsound as she advanced in years, and her standards of equipment and execution were so exacting that her novels represented immeasurably more labour than works of the same dimensions would have cost a writer more fluent and less self-critical.

But this is the price an author has to pay for work that will wear. Many of her contemporaries produced more in bulk, and were little less successful than she as regards their immediate reception; but they have found their place in limbo, whereas a third generation is now reading George Eliot, and she seems certain of the attention of a thirtieth.

We have alluded already to the essay on her by Sir Leslie Stephen. Nowhere is this more unsatisfactory to an admirer of George Eliot than in its treatment of *Romola*. He smiles at her attempt, by occasional visits to Florence and study of its history and literature, to catch

the idiom of its life in the fifteenth century. This he compares to the undertaking of an Italian lady, by flying visits to London, to catch the idiom of the contemporary cockney, so as to portray him in literature. Stephen seems to have overlooked the fact that by his standard all historical fiction would be impossible. Nay, pressed closely, his position involves the impossibility of any man's conceiving the consciousness of another as it is for that other. This would restrict literature to autobiography, no specimen of which could be criticised. One need not contend that George Eliot succeeded in her task; but this is quite a different matter from declaring such a task inherently impossible, or her method of essaying it unsound. Stephen is here using the logic (or the chop-logic) that proves everything impossible until it is done. Yet, in spite of the paradox involved, we do learn to walk by walking and to swim by swimming. And there are (in the Bible and elsewhere) "historical" tales which, if unhistorical of the periods with which they purport to deal, have the more serviceable merit of being soundly historical of the time in which they were written, and of those elements of humanity which do not change with time.

Now *Romola*, at the worst, is one of these. Its value does not depend on the possibility of reproducing, by George Eliot's method or another's, the consciousness of fifteenth-century Florentines as it was for them. Its subject is "the breaking-strain of a man under temptation," — an affair not dependent on country or period. Every man is in danger of falling like Tito Melema. Hence the warning is never untimely. As for the much-criticised portrait of Savonarola, it is possible for an un-

learned reader to obtain a more vivid and perhaps not false impression of his Elijah-like dimensions from George Eliot's free, imaginative insight than from the laborious detail of exact biographers. And what of Romola's own experience? As a nineteenth-century positivist read into the fifteenth century, she may be anachronistic; but is such a picture of high hopes frustrate, and of a nobler spiritual growth through the frustration than the fulfillment of the hopes could have brought, ever false in essentials?

Much has been said of the alleged decline of George Eliot's powers in her later novels. It is time that a protest should be entered against this uncritical commonplace. To one who has no gift for devising imaginary characters or situations, it is a great reinforcement to get the support of so skilled a novelist as Mr. Hugh Walpole for one's conviction that, in technique and in many other of the highest powers of the fiction-writer, she was growing steadily to the end. She did not begin fiction until she was thirty-eight, and her productive period covered the ensuing twenty years. Now it may be true that in her later works there are no single characters so vividly individualized as Dinah Morris and Mrs. Poyser, and no single episode comparable in tragic poignancy with the flight, trial, confession and death of Hetty Sorrel. Yet I dare venture the conviction that *Middlemarch* is a far more artistically devised and skilfully executed work than *Adam Bede*. Indeed, I think it decidedly the best of her works.

One other criticism of Stephen's must be reckoned with. He declares (with his eye on Tito and Will Ladislaw) that George Eliot's men are always women. He seems

to imply that this must inevitably be the case with the male characters of any woman writer. Here he is again using an *a priori* argument and a logic inadequate to the subtlety of life. For, if we grant his position, we shall find ourselves driven to the conclusion that no man, poet or novelist or dramatist, can create women characters. Let us keep clear the two questions: that of possibility and that of fact. I am ready to defend some of George Eliot's men; but I am more concerned to save the case that Stephen in effect condemns—namely, that women can depict men and *vice versa*. I do not wish heedlessly to accept a verdict that would deprive Lady Macbeth, Portia and Hermione of their womanhood.

Now it is undeniable that Will Ladislaw is more feminine than Dorothea, and Seth Bede than Dinah; but what of Lydgate, and Garth, and Adam Bede, and Tryan? What of Farebrother and Dempster? Sir Leslie Stephen drew the lines tighter than nature does. Perhaps my disagreement with him may be due to a difference of heredity. It just happens that I number among my ancestry, on both sides of the family, a long line of women. Possibly Stephen did not.

One element of permanent truth and value in George Eliot's work is the fact that her characters are almost always complex; that is to say, they are like real people. She shows us bad people doing good things and good people doing bad things. We can believe in Bulstrode, whereas Pecksniff is quite too good to be true. Mr. Chesterton was profoundly right when he said that Diogenes with his torch at noonday failed to find an honest man because it did not occur to him to look inside a thief.

He points out the superior discrimination of the Founder of Christianity, who looked for his honest man on a gibbet, and found him there.

George Eliot was not a poet. We know this, because we have the proof in a volume of nearly seven hundred pages. But there is much matter bound up with her lack of art, and we shall do well to prize the substance while admitting the defects of the form. In such poems as *A Minor Prophet* and *The Choir Invisible*, and in certain passages of the *Spanish Gypsy*, she has given utterance to a brave and rational faith, which in days of darkness and sorrow has helped many to a renewal of courage and peace. She will make no terms with illusion, nor will she believe or preach anything merely because it is pleasant; but out of utter truthfulness she quarries faith and hope.

Thus there is reason for the enduring admiration of George Eliot which has prompted some of us to the observance of her centenary. I, for one, whatever you may think of me for the opinion, consider her not merely the greatest woman novelist I have read, but the finest sympathetic genius that ever worked through the medium of prose fiction. It is only the noblest spirits whose sympathy is universal. This universality she displays throughout; and nowhere more splendidly than in the power which enabled her to create the characters of Mordecai and Deronda. Even one who cannot accept without reservations the argument of chapter 42 of *Deronda*, or of the essay entitled *The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!* must yet salute with reverence the humanity which could leap the barriers of race and creed and express the aspirations of an alien people in a form which they themselves consider classical.

So, with all due deference to our grave and reverend juniors, a plain man may still question whether the modernity-worshippers, who sneer at George Eliot without reading her, are not themselves thereby the losers. We have not now, nor are we likely soon to see, a generation strong enough to be able to disregard her warnings of the perils of moral collapse, or rich enough spiritually to be able, without loss, to dispense with the rare ethical wisdom garnered in her pages.

V

THE RELIGION OF GEORGE TYRRELL

(1917)

FROM the din of arms and from the drum-fire of war literature with which at present we are incessantly assailed, it is a relief to steal back at moments to the eternal interests. The public has forgotten the problems and the personalities on which the limelight fell before the war, and upon which it must again be turned when the vast preoccupation of the moment shall have relaxed its imperious claim upon our attention. But because even the world-war has not changed the nature or the enduring needs of the spirit of man, it is well occasionally to strike against the tyranny by which in these days we are "put from beholding the bright countenance of Truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies," and to betake ourselves, in defiance of the hour and its exigencies, to the underlying spiritual interests of mankind.

If further excuse be needed for the theme of this Essay, I would explain that I recently learned with a shock of surprise, from an unimpeachable authority, that the name and work of George Tyrrell are practically unknown, not merely to the public of Mr. Sunday and Mr. Charles Chaplin, but even to persons who are more than

ordinarily interested in the literature of philosophy and religion. It is hard to realize that the works of one of the greatest masters of style, and one of the most exquisitely spiritual minds that the English-speaking world has produced in our time, should be so unfamiliar even to this minority of the American public as they apparently are; especially when the fact is considered that Tyrrell, greatly against his grain, was during the last few years of his life involved in an ecclesiastical scandal and pitchforked into the position of leader and inspirer to an international movement within the Roman Church which attracted the sympathetic interest of Protestants and of all liberal thinkers.

George Tyrrell, the descendant of an ancient Anglo-Norman family, was born at Dublin in the year 1861. Educated in a somewhat haphazard Protestantism, he drifted rather than thought his way into the Church of Rome in 1879, and passed through the various stages of educational and other discipline, preparatory to admission to the Society of Jesus. At the end of the century his writings incurred the distrust of the Jesuit authorities, whose influence at Rome, exercised in the most reactionary and illiberal spirit, was powerful enough to bring about his virtual expulsion from that Society. Persisting after this in his labours upon those crucial problems of religion which the official Church has met only with the tactics of the ostrich, he was at length excommunicated. Worn out with labour and sorrow, he died on the 15th of July, 1909, leaving behind him a series of works on which men of every religious label can draw for spiritual refreshment and strength. The movement called Modernism,

officially condemned and reprobated by the papal clique, but certain ultimately to be adopted, with modifications, under another name, as the only principle by which educated and intellectually honest persons can remain loyal to Catholicism, owes more to him than to any other single leader; more even than it owes to Loisy.

In estimating any thinker, the first duty imposed by intellectual ethics is to interpret his label with reference to the specific context of his own thought and to the qualifications which he himself placed upon it. What one must labour for is not merely exactness of definition in the sense in which this is indispensable in science. Rather, one's problem is to avoid the snare which the general definition of a party name always constitutes. Precisely because it is general, no party name is or can be adequately descriptive of the individual thinking of any one of those listed under it; in every case its denotation is unique.

Thus Tyrrell stands before the world as a Modernist. With his fellow-Modernists of the Roman Church, and with others in the Anglican Church, to say nothing of Liberal Protestants and kindred thinkers elsewhere, he held many doctrines and principles in common. He shared with all of them the determination to be intellectually honest at any cost, and to take account, in adjusting religion to the movement of the age, of all known or ascertainable facts in philosophy, science, history and Biblical criticism. He differed, however, from the Liberal Protestant, and also from many of his fellow-reformers in the Roman camp, in his fundamental conception of the nature of dogma, and the seat, character and scope of religious authority. He differed from them,

above all, in his understanding of the sense in which, and the conditions under which, the ideal aspirations of the human spirit, which are expressed in religion generally, and more partially and specifically in individual religions, may be considered attainable.

Tyrrell never succumbed to the disease of ecclesiolatry; still less to that papolatry by which, owing to the success of the Vatican clique in rooting out the historic conception of Catholicism, it has been replaced in the Roman Church from 1870 onwards, and most completely since the publication on September 8, 1907, of the encyclical condemning Modernism.¹ For him the Church was never an end in itself, but only a means to the spiritual service of humanity. Infallibility, if it lurked anywhere, was to be sought only in the spiritual subconsciousness of the Church at large; in the instincts of the soul, not in the propositions of the discursive reason; never in the theological formulations of any single age, even though these embodied a temporary œcumenical consensus; least of all in the utterances placed by the wire-pullers on the lips of an individual Pope, in these later times in which the Pope has been saying, in effect, *L'église, c'est moi*. Theology stood to religion as art-criticism to art; or, at best, as grammar to language. The life of the spirit was the one sacred thing. No creed could be final; each creed was a tentative and provisional "explicitation" of what was

¹ This encyclical (officially cited as *Pascendi Gregis*), translated from the Latin, together with a manifesto of the Italian Modernists in reply to it, also translated (both by Tyrrell), was published in a small volume entitled *The Programme of Modernism*, with an introduction by the Rev. A. Leslie Lilley. (London: Fisher Unwin, 1908.)

involved and implied in the religious experience of its period. As such, it had a real, but only an educational or manuductory value. Creedlessness meant confusion and an unsatisfactory mysticism. A final and non-revisable creed, on the contrary, meant the strangling of spiritual and mental growth, and ultimately the shipwrecking of intellectual honesty. Thus Tyrrell, writing to a friend in 1904, expresses his conviction that

“the Creed, as a compendium of theology, does belong to the static, ante-development stage of thought. All the ‘lettings-out’ of theology, by gussets and patches, have been under protest, and professed to be mere logical explicitations. We now, looking back, see that the Creed ought to have been imposed merely as provisional — as registering the state of theological development of that day; as destined to be transformed into a better symbol; but, in fact, it was imposed, and is still imposed, by ‘officialdom’ as final, at least so far as it goes.”¹

This, however, leads at once to the problem of the moral position of those priests who do not ascribe literal or factual truth to the formulas which badge their profession, and which *ex professo* they are constrained to use. On this perplexing question Tyrrell has many interesting and helpful things to say, and one cannot better do justice to his position than by quoting a later passage from the letter already cited:

“As to the question: Are we honest? I reply: Indifferent honest. A deal more honest than our dogmatic

¹ *Autobiography and Life*, vol. ii, p. 184.

opponents, whose zeal is for a formula and who do not care twopence about its reality or sense. As honest, at least, as those who say, *descendit ad inferos, ascendit in cœlum*, and yet deny, when pressed, the corporeality of the soul, and the ancient idealizations of heaven and hell as understood by the framers of the Creed; as honest as those who accept the Creed in its 'natural' sense, because they are either indifferent to, or perversely ignorant of the difficulties of that sense. And I think we are more honest, because more sensitive to the rights of truth, than crudely uncompromising dissidents who ignore the reality of the 'religious process,' by which God progressively reveals Himself to the collective mind that asks and seeks and knocks through its creeds and theologies if haply it may find Him; and because we cling consciously to the earthen vessel, lest through our imperfect discrimination we should part with any life-giving remnant of the heavenly treasure that may cleave to it. English John Bull speaks as though honesty were the simplest and most elementary of virtues and not the very quintessence of noble character. At least let us confess that there are degrees of honesty as there are of reality, and that the perfection is attained only by a Christ; for the rest of us it is enough if we try to be honest and purge out our dishonesties with all diligence. As the best symptom of progress is a growing sense of one's manifold insincerities, so surely the worst is the bland self-complacency of the uncritical, who seem to themselves honest because they have never tested themselves."¹

Thus, according to him, there was a legitimate place

¹ *Ibid.*, D. 185.

for dogma; but the Roman Church had given it an illegitimate place. It had made what should have been a condition and instrument of liberty into the instrument of an ever-hardening tyranny. No expression of spiritual truth (*i.e.*, of the essential spiritual life of man and of its cosmic relations and roots) in human language can have more than a symbolic value. In talking of God, for instance, we at once become not only anthropomorphic, but automorphic. Every mental image we can construct of deity is infected with this incurable disease; or, rather, let us say, is subject to this inevitable limitation, which would be no disadvantage if its nature were known and admitted, but which, being either unrecognized or not admitted, becomes the fruitful mother of superstitions and perversions. Nothing is clearer in Tyrrell than the fact that he had quite early emancipated himself from what he sometimes calls "the outside God," and what Arnold called the "magnified and non-natural man." But this does not mean that he became either agnostic or atheistic. Neither does it mean that in worshipping that inscrutable Reality which must needs take imaginative form as the highest ideal of our human selves, he fell into the insane idolatry of self-worship.

A man's fundamental thoughts must needs be linked together in such wise that one illuminates another, and Tyrrell's way of apprehending God becomes clearer when we place it alongside his conception of immortality and of the fate of human ideals in the present world, regarded as throwing light upon their genesis. He is convinced, as completely as any Buddhist, that the present life, not only for the individual but for the human race, is a scene of

inevitable frustration. Thus in his posthumous volume, entitled *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, he writes as follows:

“The verdict of the deeper spiritual intuition on this life is always pessimistic, and it is a verdict that is only confirmed by experience and reflection. It is evident that there are vital and progressive forces at work everywhere, but it is equally plain that there are destructive forces, that life is strangled by its own fertility, that it is faced by the insoluble problem of finding room for its expansion in every direction, that the utmost its ingenuity can do is to defer the inevitable day of defeat and to prolong its periods of uninterrupted progress. The world is the arena of a conflict between a multitude of irreconcilable ends. The belief that they are ordained to an eventual harmony, however useful as a stimulus to combat, falls to pieces on closer inspection, which reveals an inherent fault or rift in nature. All life is under the sway of sad mortality.

“To-day we are so enamoured of our scientific and material progress that we have no eyes for our many decadences, even though we are face to face with social and moral chaos. We believe, with childish simplicity, that we are making straight for the millennium. We forget that every new comfort is a new necessity, a new source of discontent and unhappiness, and leaves the relative proportion of happiness and misery unaffected. Thrust out at one place, the tide of sorrow breaks in at another: *expellas furca tamen usque recurret*. If medicine cures diseases, it enables the diseased to increase and multiply and re-establish the average of unhealthiness. Shall progress ever wipe away the tears from all eyes? Shall it ever extin-

guish love and pride and ambition and all the griefs attendant in their train? Is it enough to give a man bread for his belly and instruction for his brain? Prolong life as it will, can progress conquer death, with its terrors for the dying, its tears for the surviving? Can it ever control the earthquake, the tempest, the lightning, the cruelties of a nature indifferent to the lot of man? And even given the attainment of its facile dreams, can progress postpone the day when mankind shall be blotted off the face of a universe that will go its way as though man had never been?"¹

And accordingly the verdict is:

"Whether in himself, or in the world, if a man has ideals for both, he is bound to find not only failure, but an iron law of inevitable failure, of progress thwarted and frustrated even by its multiplicity and fecundity—its waves dashed to futile spray by their very force and volume."²

But if such is the outlook for this life, what of the beyond—if there be a beyond? Alas! the popular notion of immortality is as grotesque a tissue of incompatible imaginings as the dream of an earthly paradise:

"Any ideal condition we can *imagine* must be of the same kind [as the apocalyptic Kingdom of Heaven] in some new and inherently impossible arrangement, *e.g.*, a world of perfectly moral men in which morality would be *ipso facto* impossible; a world of goods without their essentially correlative evils; in short, a world of hills without valleys."³

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 119 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Where, then, can we grip the anchor of faith or hope? Is there no optimism which can validly oppose itself to the pessimism so abundantly certified in experience? Tyrrell's answer practically amounts to this, that were not man in his true nature affiliated to a transcendental, super-temporal and super-spatial order of spiritual reality, he never could become aware of the inherent and irreconcilable clash between this life's possibilities and the demands of his spirit. The pragmatist jeers at the idealist for affirming the goodness of the universe and then straightway proceeding to deal with a "problem of evil."¹ Tyrrell would reply that, paradox or not, it is the presence and pressure of the problem of evil which alone certifies the ultimate soundness and goodness of the universe. No product of "nature" could oppose nature to itself as an object of knowledge; no consciousness miraculously juggled out of a struggle for existence could sit in condemnatory judgment upon that struggle. It is man's discontent that declares him to be divine. But the moment he begins to objectify his yearnings in pictures of another life, he falls into error and confusion:

"Not till he resigns the desire to see what is hopelessly beyond the range of his present vision is his faith pure and unshaken. . . . He has a power, whose meaning and purpose are hid from him through lack of a proper object for their exercise. A cage-born bird, he wonders what his wings are for. He tries to make a heaven out of earth, as it were ropes out of sand. He was made for something else — he does not know what. Like the domesticated beaver, he builds his dams across the floor; he cannot tell

¹ Cf. H. Kallen, in *Creative Intelligence*, p. 410.

why. Not till he is in his native river will he understand his restless instinct, and the river is beyond all his present experience and imagination — a missing link in his mind. . . .

“The desire for . . . spiritual immortality is, then, totally distinct from that desire for a perpetuation of the present life which fits in with magical religion, and has for its object, not eternal life, but an endless prolongation of temporal life.”¹

Religion, then, wastes its time and misunderstands its function when it attempts to solve the problem of evil. Its purpose must be to bring home to men the truth that is involved in their sense of that problem — the truth as to their own nature and its necessary derivation from an infinite reality, unknowable in the sense that it is neither a thing nor an event, and therefore cannot be compared, save symbolically, with any thing in space or any happening in time, but knowable and known as the source of that power in man which gives rise to the moral problem and the moral struggle, and validates the demand of conscience for an eternal significance in the life and effort of each man and of humanity. To do the works which this doctrine prescribes is the one way to know of it. There is no royal road to deity. The experience of God does not depend upon exceptional power of metaphysical insight, and consequently is no monopoly of a mental *élite*. It is the resultant of action in the hopeless battle with evil. The more a man pits his puny effort against the overwhelming forces of darkness and wrong, the more does he become

¹ *Christianity at the Cross-Roads*, pp. 125 ff., 133.

convinced of his identity and solidarity with infinite goodness.

Here, then, we have the root of the matter. It is obvious that any thinker, of any school or church, who learns this insight from Tyrrell, will become more patient of the superstitions and materialisms by which men have blindly or instinctively affirmed their awareness of it. But, for such an one, the day of the final creed and the inerrant book, the magic-working sacrament and the sovereign authority (as of an apotheosized lawyer) claimed for the Pope, will be at an end. Questions of history, of Biblical criticism, and even of Christology, fall into an entirely secondary sphere, and we begin to discern the possibility of a truly catholic union of hearts and wills subsisting alongside of radical diversity in the intellectual presentation of religion. Tyrrell remained loyal to the Roman Church¹ not, as might be supposed, on the mere ground that under the circumstances one church was as good as another, but because he felt that in spite of its perversions, and partly even because of its superstitions, it was the best sketch and prophecy of a truly universal religious society thus far attained by man. Its very other-worldliness, which to the scientific mind is a stumbling-block and to the Liberal Protestant is foolishness, was in Tyrrell's

¹ Holding that his excommunication was an abuse of authority, he to the end considered himself a true member of the Church and resisted all inducements (as well as his own inclination) to join another. In writing to a friend, he expressed the position with characteristic felicity and humour: "They say I am to be promoted from minor to major excommunication, but nothing will shake my bulldog fidelity to the calf of my enemy's leg. 'I will never desert Mr. Micawber.'" — *Autobiography*, etc., vol. ii, p. 380.

view the evidence of its fidelity to the teaching of Christ, and also to the highest experience of the race. The apocalyptic Kingdom of Heaven, taken as fact, belongs with the Greek Olympus and the Valhalla of the Northmen; taken, however, as a protest against the vain dream of an earthly paradise, as a sharp rebuke to the bland optimism which consoles men for their own incurable sorrows by prophesying the felicity of "a posterity that never comes," it is the embodiment of an unshakable truth.

Honest as he was in facing the issues raised by Biblical criticism, Tyrrell was not a scholar in the scientific sense. The posthumous work from which we have repeatedly quoted, in so far as it treats of the Christological problem, accepts the eschatological interpretation of the Gospels which is now fashionable. If one who himself has no scholarship may venture an opinion on this point, I would submit that the present fashion in question is an exaggeration. The ethical teaching of the New Testament is far more original than Tyrrell thought it, and is also far less dependent upon eschatological ideas than he supposed. It is not to be doubted, indeed, that the first followers of Jesus expected an immediate end of the age, a miraculous subversion of the existing order. But a man's moral insight, and consequently the moral counsel he will give, is not necessarily vitiated by an illusion of this sort. Even if the illusion goes the length of monomania, it well may be that its victim will be perfectly sane on other matters, however grotesque the resulting self-contradictions — as, for example, in the case of the English millenarian who some twenty years ago wrote articles proclaiming that the world would end within two years, and at the same time

drove a hard bargain for the purchase of a ninety-nine years' lease of a house. The permanent ethical values discovered in the Gospels by Professor Nathaniel Schmidt¹ are unmistakably there, and they testify to the originality and sane insight of Jesus, whatever may have been the errors of fact or the superstitions which he shared (if he did share them) with his contemporaries.

In normal times it requires an unusual degree of penetration, or a rare profundity of spiritual experience, to realize the essential and perdurable tragedy of human life; and Tyrrell's clear discernment of it is one index of his greatness. But the catastrophe of the world-war has made this insight easy for those who formerly were lapped in the pipe-dream of a golden age of perfect felicity on earth. There is room, then, for the expectation that his message will find a response now which it could not awaken while he was with us. But neither then nor now would Tyrrell be rightly understood if his gospel were interpreted in a pessimistic sense. His pessimism is avowedly the condition of a yet deeper optimism. When the right perspective is seized, it is seen that all our causes of sorrow and frustration are necessary conditions of a joy and fulfilment transcendently outshining any other possible experience. If I may repeat an illustration I have used elsewhere, man is in the position of Saul, who goes in quest of his father's asses, and in and through his failure to find them attains instead a kingdom beyond all his hopes.

¹ See his *Prophet of Nazareth*; cf. also a chapter on "The Rediscovery of Jesus Christ," in the present writer's *Religion of Experience* (Macmillan, 1916), and the references there given to Seeley, Arnold, etc.

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(The above were published before Tyrrell's expulsion from the Society of Jesus, and bear the imprimatur of the Roman Catholic authorities. Though of great and permanent value, they are of less interest from the point of view of the foregoing sketch than the following, especially those marked with an asterisk.)

Lex Credendi. (1905)

* *A Much-Abused Letter.* (1906)

* *Through Scylla and Charybdis; or, the Old Theology and the New.* (1907)

* *Medievalism: A Reply to Cardinal Mercier.* (1908)

* *Christianity at the Cross-Roads.* (1909; posthumously.)

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(All the above, except where otherwise stated, are published by Longmans.)

VI

A BROWNE STUDY

(1918)

THE aspect that in these days most allures us in the perennially attractive personality of Sir Thomas Browne is the blameless aloofness of soul from the distractions of the hour which in days of protracted strife he was able to preserve. In bad times he was rife with good thoughts; and, while he faithfully did his duty as a man and a physician, his head was never sunk beneath the tide in which he struggled.

It has been regretted that he spent most of his 77 years¹ in provincial Norwich, which, under seventeenth century conditions of travel, was remote from the centre of intellectual and national life. But the lament is surely a misjudgment. It is as though one should begrudge to some choice old vintage the "long age in the deep-delvèd earth" to which it owes its rare bouquet. Only because Sir Thomas Browne came nigh to rivalling those long-inurned relics of his rich-distilled treatise, which had "quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests," did it become possible for us of after-days to enjoy the fine fruit of his deeply pondered broodings.

To these, despite the aesthetic revelling in his style

¹ 1605-1682.

which writers like Pater¹ and Sir Edmund Gosse² have so agreeably communicated, it may still be possible to add some words of appreciation that justice demands. Simon Wilkin, the most faithful of editors, has given us a worthily correct and punctiliously annotated text, which in its completeness might well be made accessible to Everyman, not reserved (as the few scarce copies are) for that *rara avis*, the millionaire of taste. Charles Lamb lived by him and was his most perfect reader; nor can we set bounds to the influence of Browne's charming trick of self-disclosure on the courageous and lovable egotism of Elia. In earlier days, Johnson had learned from Browne all that his eye was capable of seeing and his ear of hearing, though too often that strain he heard was of a higher mood than he could receive and transmute. Coleridge has left some precious marginalia, which doubtless have opened the eyes of many for the first time to the wizardry of such passages as the closing page of the *Garden of Cyrus*. Sir Edmund Gosse, in certain pages of comment, well-scanned by expert eyes, on the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, has made it possible for this generation to read with due enjoyment that delicious old folio, and find therein a "midnight darling" after Lamb's own heart. He has also placed the *Religio Medici* in a new, if somewhat dry light, by his skilful disentangling of its plaited strands of scepticism and hesitant mysticism. Pater, in a strain that oftentimes recalls Browne's own unique cadence, has turned our eyes to the quaint trifles, eloquent with the pathetic impress of departed humanity, that fired the imagination

¹ Essay on Browne in *Appreciations*.

² Monograph in "English Men of Letters" series.

and gave wings to the fancy of the old country doctor. Francis Thompson, in an essay that one wishes longer, has well defended him against the hackneyed and overdone charge of pedantry, Latinity and obscurity. Indeed, little is left to say of Browne's style, unless we would repeat after others. Nor can one coming fresh from a re-perusal of Browne's pages, indulge in that rather malicious and scarce profitable sport of hurling his critics at each other's heads; a sport which he would himself have condemned as "Zoilism,"¹ though many have mistaken it for scientific criticism, and vainly imagined that valid judgments might be reached through it.

The treatment of his manner having been thus exhaustive, we shall here only offer a tribute to the value of his thought — or rather thoughts; for he is no system-maker. He is a conscious artist and a determined believer, in whom the will to believe often becomes the will to make-believe. But because his central thought is the reverse of arbitrary, because it is invincibly true and precious, and terribly needed for the spiritual reassurance of men to-day, we can forgive him the freaks and vagaries of belief that accompany it.

Religio Medici is the work of a Platonic sceptic, who writes for his own eye, not for the world. (Johnson was quite astray in thinking that the surreptitiousness of the first edition was a trick of Browne's.) It being commonly believed that if you met three physicians two of them would be atheists, Browne sought to prove that a

¹ "Bring candid eyes unto the perusal of men's works, and let not Zoilism or detraction blast well-intended labours." — *Christian Morals*, Pt. II, § ii.

physician could be a man of complete religious faith, albeit a thoroughgoing scientific worker and metaphysical sceptic. Some wilfulness must go to the justification of such an attitude; and Browne is wilful as to what he will receive, and why he will receive it. "Since I was of understanding to know that we know nothing, my reason hath been more pliable to the will of faith: I am now content to understand a mystery without a rigid definition, in an easy and Platonic description. . . . Where I cannot satisfy my reason, I love to humour my fancy." Accordingly, it is perhaps not unjust to boil down the mere argument of the book (which of course is the smallest thing about it) to the following four propositions:

(1) That many true things, antecedent to experience, are incredible;

(2) That, human faculty being what it is, belief is very much a matter of geography, of taste and fancy, or of fashion;

(3) That Christianity, not despite but *by reason both of its moral and intellectual paradoxes*, is the best thing to believe;

(4) That he believes it first, seeks reasons for it afterwards, and goes on believing it whether reasons are assignable or not.

Before condemning this attitude too straitly, it should be remembered (what we moderns so often absurdly forget) that no philosophy which does *not* involve mystery can be true. Any doctrine that assumes, like our current materialism, to *solve* the world-riddles is *eo ipso* convicted of falsity and inadequacy.

Some of the details of Browne's theology, as he sets

them forth, tempt one (as they tempted even his earliest commentator, Sir Kenelm Digby) to question the statement that he never smiled. The reality and sincerity of his faith, to be sure, are never in doubt. He lays claim to "the honourable style of a Christian," and it is undeniable that he was a true and faithful son of the Church of England. But when, in his eagerness to demonstrate the robustness of his faith, he declares that there are not mysteries enough for him in divinity; when he tells us that "*certum est quia impossibile est*" is his strongest rebuff to the suggestions of Satan; when we read: "This, I think, is no vulgar part of faith, to believe a thing not only above but *contrary* to reason, and against the arguments of our proper senses," — we have a feeling that the ice is wearing thin, and that the corners of that sober mouth are twitching. He loves to start a doubt, merely that he may show us how valiant is that faith of his, which can go on unstaggered though the doubt be left unresolved. He has conquered his misgivings and the weaknesses of his belief, "not in a martial posture, but on my knees." Satan had once tempted him to believe that the cures wrought by the brazen serpent were effected naturally, through sympathy. He anticipates Mark Twain's polemical sea captain with the suggestion (made only to be rejected) that the water of Elijah's miracle, wherewith the sacrifices were drenched before the prophet ignited them, might be naphtha. He admits that there are in the Scriptures "stories that do exceed the fables of poets, and to a captious reader sound like Gargantua or Bevis." The whole saga of Samson, with each and every one of its details, he takes for sober history, though confessing that among all the

"fabulous conceits" of times past or present none can be found to "carry the buckler unto" it. Yet he is unperturbed, because by an influence from the little finger of the Almighty greater things may be done than any producible by man.

Faith? Why, these things are easy. Show him something really difficult; something that will task his belief in earnest, and render its victory worth while!

"Myself could show a catalogue of doubts, never yet imagined nor questioned, as I know, which are not resolved at the first hearing; not fantastick queries or objections of air; for I cannot hear of atoms in divinity. I can read the history of the pigeon that was sent out of the ark, and returned no more, yet not question how she found out her mate that was left behind: that Lazarus was raised from the dead, yet not demand where, in the interim, his soul awaited; *or raise a law-case whether his heir might lawfully detain his inheritance bequeathed unto him by his death*, and he, though restored to life, have no plea or title unto his former possessions. Whether Eve was framed out of the left side of Adam, I dispute not; because I stand not yet assured which is the right side of a man; or whether there be any such distinction in nature. That she was edified out of the rib of Adam, I believe; ¹ yet raise no question who shall arise with that rib at the resurrection. Whether Adam was an hermaphrodite, as the rabbins contend upon the letter of the text; because it is contrary to reason, there should be an hermaphrodite before there was a woman, or a composition

¹ This subject is discussed with due gravity and detail in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Bk. vii, cap. ii.

of two natures, before there was a second composed."

That question concerning the property of Lazarus is a gem. It will furnish an ideal text for the next Swift or Erehwon Butler that the gods send us. And when Browne closes his paragraph by telling us that such questions "are not worthy our vacant hours, much less our serious studies," and that they are "pieces only fit to be placed in Pantagruel's library, or bound up with Tartaretus, *De Modo Cacandi*," we remind ourselves that he was the contemporary of Dryden and Hudibras Butler, and question again the verdict as to his incapacity for laughter. How could so well-versed a Platonist have failed to learn what irony is? And who that had once perceived an irony could have written this page without a silent chuckle?

But that man can laugh wholesomely whose "ultimate faith" rests on adamant; and Browne is never at the mercy of the unruly winds of doctrine. It is true he does homage to Scripture and Church, reposing in both a good faith that to-day excites our wonder, and the envy of such as wear shovel-hats and are ambitious to excel in orthodoxy. But the real foundation of his serene defiance of that old atheist Nature is nearer at home, more familiar and less questionable than any external authority. Browne does not find it hard to believe in God because he never fails to perceive the intrinsic and native grandeur of man.

Now it is here, if we would seek a rallying point for faith, that our attention must first be centred. The final judgment upon the nineteenth century will not be that it lost faith in God; it will be the far more terrific verdict that it lost faith in man. Without irreverence or flippancy, but as a sober philosophic judgment and fruit of experience,

we may say, "Take care of man, and God will take care of Himself." Remember what *you* incontrovertibly are, and the whole spiritual universe becomes credible; nay, is necessitated to explain you. Once grasp that truth which was Browne's first and last certitude, and no "warfare between science and theology," no overthrow of the orthodoxies of the sects, can ever cause you to veil your crest amid the thronging despairs of materialism.

What then has Browne to teach us on this essential point? "Truths that wake to perish never." Truths that our evolutionary science forgot whilst it was busy comparing the human body with the forms of apes; yet truths that were all the time implied in its very power to make that comparison:

"We carry with us the wonders we seek without us: there is all Africa and her prodigies in us. We are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies wisely learns, in a compendium, what others labour at in a divided piece and endless volume."

A "piece of nature." Well, but what is nature? Not an independent world of mindless reality. Slightly as he touches upon metaphysic, it is clear that our physician never succumbed to that prevalent mental illusion, that *hysteron proteron*, which derives man and his powers from a world that it needs man's powers to create.¹

Only let this truth be grasped, and it matters little in what terms it be expressed. Browne sets it forth in his Platonic fashion:

¹ Perhaps the clearest statement and strongest vindication of this radical truth accessible to English readers is still the Introduction and first Book of Thomas Hill Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*.

“The severe schools shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes, that this visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein, as in a portrait, things are not truly, but in equivocal shapes, and as they counterfeit some real substance in that invisible fabric.”

The apprehension by man of this duality is possible because man belongs to both its aspects; because (as I have elsewhere said) “as objects we form part of the series which as subjects we create.”¹ Note how distinctly Browne traces the evolution of man, carrying it to its spiritual end, without which the physical beginnings would not only be meaningless but could never have been discerned:

“We are only that amphibious piece, between a corporeal and a spiritual essence; that middle form, that links those two together, and makes good the method of God and nature, that jumps not from extremes, but unites the incompatible distances by some middle and participating natures. That we are the breath and similitude of God, it is indisputable, and upon record of Holy Scripture: but to call ourselves a microcosm, or little world, I thought it only a pleasant trope of rhetorick, till my near judgment and second thoughts told me there was a real truth therein. For, first we are a rude mass, and in the rank of creatures which only are, and have a dull kind of being, not yet privileged with life, or preferred to sense or reason; next we live the life of plants, the life of animals, the life of men, and at last the life of spirits: running on, in one mysterious nature, those five kinds of existences, which comprehend the creatures, not only of the world, but of

¹ *Religion of Experience*, p. 202. (Macmillan, 1916.)

the universe. Thus is man that great and true *amphibium*, whose nature is disposed to live, not only like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds; for though there be but one [world] to sense, there are two to reason, the one visible, the other invisible."

And again at the close, rising with full courage to the plenitude of his strength, he returns to this, the supreme *motif* of his whole tractate, in that glorious passage, the super-audible music whereof was so unintelligible to Johnson:

"Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in. The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on: for the other, I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas's shoulders. The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh that circumscribes me limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens it hath an end cannot persuade me I have any. I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty. Though the number of the arc do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind. Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us; something that was before the elements, and owes no homage unto the sun.

Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understands not thus much hath not his introduction or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man."

Dr. Johnson's comment upon this is as follows:¹

"There is, undoubtedly, a sense in which all life is miraculous: as it is an union of powers of which we can image no connection, a succession of motions of which the first cause must be supernatural: but life, thus explained, whatever it may have of miracle, will have nothing of fable; and therefore, the author undoubtedly had regard to something by which he imagined himself distinguished from the rest of mankind.

"Of these wonders, however, the view that can now be taken of his life offers no appearance."

Here we see the venerable Goliath of common sense in his most Philistine phase. This is that solid Johnson who thought to refute Berkeley by kicking the stone at Harwich. Browne's meaning has soared over his head, like the crows of Milton's "gallant man" who sought to pound them up by shutting his park-gate.

Browne is here blending his meditation on his own career with general thoughts on man. He is taking himself as a type of the universal miracle. It is as he is man, not as he is Thomas Browne, that he finds himself amazing and marvellous. A contrast there is in these sentences; but it is not between the author and other men. It is between the unique life in all men and that lower phase of life which appears in plants and in those animals which

¹ *Life of Sir Thomas Browne*, reprinted in Wilkin's ed. of Browne's *Works*, vol. i, p. xxiii f.

are not organic to the spiritual nature that constitutes and differentiates man. This it is which sounds "to common ears like a fable." It is the piece of divinity *in us*, the heavenly and celestial part within *us*, that raises Browne's voice to this solemn strain of wonder and gratulation. Amphibious man cannot do less than marvel and lift up his heart when he discovers his power to live and thrive not only in the waters of animality but on the celestial shores of the spiritual continent. To realize our proper eternality; to discover that our souls create the time in which the history of our world is played, and the space in which its suns and planets are deployed; — is not this occasion and justification enough for voting every human life a miracle, whether of more or less than thirty years? And if this be certain to reflective thought (as I take it to be), why reject the certainty because it is mysterious, because its *modus* is inexplicable? For even though we impoverish ourselves by rejecting it, we shall have still to confess with Browne that "we are men, *and we know not how.*"

In such passages as these Browne often surprises us with that lofty eloquence which was peculiar to his period, like the dignified grace of its attire, as we see it portrayed upon the canvases of Van Dyck. To ripen the fruitage of genius there goes the whole influence of the climate of an age, which contributes, in soil and atmosphere, elements as indispensable as the vital seed of genius itself. A Thomas Browne of the eighteenth or nineteenth century would have spoken with far other voice than that which comes to us, with its alternate strains of quaintness and splendour, from the cathedral close of seventeenth-century

Norwich. A reader who knew nothing of Browne, and happened upon the sentences here reproduced, or others of a yet more perfect music in the *Urn Burial*, would infallibly pronounce them to have issued from one who belonged to the regal fellowship of Taylor and Clarendon and Milton, who was of their generation, and had been brooded on by the Oversoul of England in the same days as they.

For times like these, when the "drums and tramlings" of new conquests are instant and ominous to our ears, it is medicinal to listen again to the deep note of courage with which Browne, rebuking the crime of suicide, closes that refuge of despair which the Stoic Seneca had thrown open:

"Herein are they in extremes, that can allow a man to be his own assassin. . . . This is indeed not to fear death, but yet to be afraid of life. It is a brave act of valour to condemn death; but, where life is more terrible than death, it is then the truest valour to dare to live."

Strange, is it not, that this note of courage should have verified itself (not as an *a priori* ethical principle, but as a truth of experience) in these days, when life for so many is more terrible than death? One of the most heartening pieces of news that the war has brought came recently, in the statistics which showed that, since 1914, the number of suicides has greatly decreased in England. This is one of the glorious surprises of life, and shows how men discover the grander elements of their nature under circumstances which a comfort-loving generation could never beforehand have been expected to endure. If the war, with its horrors, could have been foreseen, it

would have been accounted a verification of that terrible saying of Edgar Poe:

*The play is the tragedy Man,
And the hero the conqueror Worm.*

For in anticipation we should have envisaged the terrors of the war as breaking upon men such as we knew them in the days of peace. We should not have allowed for the change in *them* which the emergency has occasioned, nor reckoned on the liberation of their deeply hidden and unsuspected powers of endurance, resistance, self-transcendence. But this bringing out of the imprisoned greatness of men by tragic vicissitudes of fortune is the way in which experience verifies the proverb about man's extremity being God's opportunity.

Browne rises to his greatest perfection of style in the *Urn Burial*, in which, taking it all in all, we have a literary treasure unique in our language. The value of the little treatise consists entirely in its form, and in the ethical and psychological reflections to which the leisurely play of his broodings moves the author. Over these paragraphs he has laboured like a sculptor perfecting the features of a statue. Every word, every cadence, every consonantal sequence, represents the results of loving industry as well as felicitous artistry. The learned details concerning the methods of sepulture of various nations are often inaccurate, and of little interest in themselves; but it is unfailingly interesting to follow the mind of Browne as he rambles among them and turns them to the account of his charming fancy. Who but he could have given such a turn to his remarks upon the symbolism of ancient

Christianity, in which he finds "hopeful draughts and hinting imagery of the resurrection, which is the life of the grave, and *sweetens our habitations in the land of moles and pismires.*"

At the very outset, beginning his Epistle Dedicatory, Browne has some sentences which display his mastery of the secrets of literary witchcraft. Analyze his words, and their bare meaning is found to be a platitude. But take that platitude as he presents it, with the slow falling cadences of suggested sorrow, and it becomes a psalm of mourning, the epitome of the pathos and frustrations of human life:

"When the funeral pyre was out, and the last valediction over, men took a lasting adieu of their interred friends, little expecting the curiosity of future ages should comment upon their ashes; and, having no old experience of the duration of their relicks, held no opinion of such after-considerations. But who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? Who hath the oracles of his ashes, or whither they are to be scattered?"

Beginning thus with a lamentation over man's mortality, he ends with a triumph-song of the conquest of death. No connection or contrast in Browne is accidental. Master as he is of the art that conceals art, we never hear in his work the clanking of the machinery of structure; but the close attention which his craftsmanship deserves will reveal the careful judgment that has dictated the order of presentation of his thoughts. The *Urn Burial* in this respect is like a true poem, in which every note is sounded in the one context that will reveal its fullest beauty. In the last chapter he has been meditating on the

frustration of human ambitions; yet he finds even in the follies and excesses of sepulchral ceremonies a testimony to the greatness of humanity:

“But man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infamy of his nature.”

And thus the transition rises to the truer valuation, as he thinks it, which the doctrine of spiritual immortality has enabled men to place upon life and death; and we have that admirable if somewhat too florid passage expressing the sense of triumph amid apparent defeat which the Christian doctrine brought to those who were able to hold it unwaveringly:

“Pious spirits who passed their days in raptures of futurity, made little more of this world than the world that was before it, while they lay obscure in the chaos of pre-ordination, and night of their fore-beings. And if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, ecstasies, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kiss of the spouse, gustation of God, and ingestion into the divine shadow, they have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them.”

But Browne's value for us does not depend upon our ability to share with him his literal belief in the Christian dogmas. His faith reposes, as we have shown, on his certainty as to what man *is*, not upon the uncertainty as to what man is to be hereafter. Many passages could be

quoted, from the *Christian Morals* and elsewhere, which re-echo the splendid note already sounded in the *Religio Medici*. We do not need to grope in graves or talk with the returning dead. If it be true that there is *now* a piece of divinity in us, that we verily are part of the force that makes the world, and of the "love" (or whatever else) "that moves the sun and the other stars," then extraneous attestations of our future being are superfluous. But if this be not true or not verifiable, then no such attestations can avail to awaken faith in ourselves and our destiny.

But to those who can see with the eyes of Sir Thomas Browne into the heart and mind of living man, and decipher the traces of the high pedigree that these imply, there can be no place for despair, even in the midst of world-tragedy. For a due estimate of the greatness of man, though it adds to our sense of horror at the impious destruction of life and of the great expressions of the spirit of dead generations, also assures us that the resistance of free and freedom-loving men to the savage enterprise of the common enemy would be infinitely and intrinsically worth while, even though we had no solid ground for faith in its victorious consummation. To this high estimate of man we are brought back by our quaint old physician, who, with all his Anglican orthodoxy, is still Pagan enough to enjoin upon us an Aristotelian magnanimity and modesty:

"Be substantially great in thyself, and more than thou appearest unto others; and let the world be deceived in thee, as they are in the lights of heaven."

This is no injunction from a mere "piece of nature" to

its compeers. It is other than "a movement in the brain of a bewildered ape." It is the voice of a spirit that belongs to eternity; and it has its inspiring effect because in ourselves there is an eternal nature to respond to it. Deep calleth unto deep, and God nods to God from within each of us.

VII

THE REVIVAL OF SPIRITUALISM

(1920)

FOR the purposes of this Essay, I shall use, without discussion, the term "spiritualism" to denote the wave of masked materialism on the crest of which the doctrine of communication with the departed has been sweeping into the foreground of public attention, with ever-increasing momentum, since the war broke out in 1914. Nothing, indeed, could well be less appropriate than the use of the name "spiritualism" for such a doctrine; but inasmuch as common usage has attached the misfitting label to the phenomena and beliefs in question, it would be idle to dispute about a mere word.

One of the puzzling aspects of the situation is the description of this materialistic spiritualism as something *new*. Sir Oliver Lodge talks as though he were presenting new facts and new discoveries, which the scientific world perversely refuses to recognize. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes a pamphlet entitled *The New Revelation*, presenting us, under this title, with a restatement of the oldest beliefs known to human tradition. Why this insistence on the novelty of the ancient? Is there anything new in the matter at all? The protagonists of spiritualism would perhaps reply, "Yes; the new element is the put-

ting of the question on a scientific basis, the use of experiment, research and inductive reasoning upon the phenomena. People may in the past have believed what we believe; but our case is that we offer proof."

That is, of course, the question. But before coming to grips with it, we may remind ourselves that the feeling of certitude entertained by the revivalists of spiritualism is not greater than that experienced by their predecessors of primitive times. The believers are a relatively smaller minority to-day than they were in the childhood of the world. There was a time, apparently, when nobody doubted such alleged facts and such interpretative doctrines as the spiritualists are now propounding; whereas to-day the great mass of the public (somewhat to the indignation of leading spiritualists) is notably sceptical regarding both facts and interpretations.

One may doubt, indeed, whether the public at large is so conscious of the antiquity of these beliefs as their more enlightened advocates are ready, upon challenge, to declare themselves. Did the large American audiences which recently greeted Sir Oliver Lodge really know that the gospel which he was preaching, and which they were also reading in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's pages under the title of *The New Revelation*, consists of a rehash of the very oldest kind of religious and magical ideas? This is certainly open to question. For what spiritualistic literature offers us, as truth verified by scientific methods, is just the doctrine of animism; the doctrine, namely, that there is a secondary or ghost body, attenuated but still material, somehow blended with the grosser texture of the physical body. This ghost body (sometimes declared to consist

of ether) is capable of liberating itself from its enveloping physical texture; temporarily during sleep or trance, and permanently at death. While thus liberated it is capable of doing nearly all the things done by the grosser body, and some others as well. Its chief limitation seems to be that it cannot, under everyday conditions, communicate, through the regular channels of the senses, with spirits still confined to the solider physical instrument. This difficulty, however, can be got over through its temporarily taking possession of the physical machinery of some man or woman with a special aptitude for being so used. Hence the phenomena of mediumship. Even without a medium the "ethereal" vehicle of the spirit can sometimes make itself manifest. Its power to do this, we are told, seems to be at maximum when the death of its physical correlative is imminent; and so we have a multitude of stories of apparitions to distant friends, occurring at the very moment (subsequently ascertained) when the physical body of the manifesting spirit was *in articulo mortis*.

Now, this theory of the make-up of human nature and of the activities of what may be roughly called disembodied spirits, both at the moment of death and long afterwards, was the practically universal belief of primitive men and savages. This is a fact which can be confirmed by reference to any good text-book of anthropology. There is no better illustration of the prevalence of the belief in ancient times than the Old Testament story of the Witch of En-dor; and the belief thus shown to have prevailed among the ancient Hebrews was shared by them with all the tribes of the earth of whom we have any record; with the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent, for ex-

ample; with Polynesians; with Australian aborigines and with Maoris; with all the peoples of Eastern Asia, ancient and modern. The works of Tylor and Andrew Lang and Sir James Frazer, and of the travelers and explorers from whom they drew their material, abound with proof of the world-wide prevalence of such ideas.

Their early and general prevalence, of course, is no proof that the beliefs in question are not true. If we felt compelled to abandon everything of which the beginnings can be traced back to savagery, we should have to cut loose not only from religion, but also from science and art and politics. Yet the fact is worth recalling, at a time when these most ancient ideas are being revamped as disclosures of "unrecognized human capacity" and as "new revelations" from a world beyond normal experience.

Not only are the beliefs ancient, but they have never really been abandoned. In the historic religions, they have been transformed and curbed, but their substance has persisted. Perhaps one of the greatest services rendered by the Christian Church consisted in its rigorous curbing of the curiosity of mankind regarding the occult and the supernatural. The Church never denied immortality; it affirmed it. Nor did it deny that communication with the dead was possible; it rather prescribed the conditions under which communication must take place. This must be only by prayer, either addressed to the Deity with the co-operation of the faithful departed, or addressed to the living spirits of the saints petitioning for their co-operation in influencing the Deity. The Church admitted that it was possible to get into *rapport* with living spirits not in

human bodies, but it insisted (and, for that matter, still insists) that the practice was dangerous, because the spirits most likely to be encountered by human seekers were those of devils, who would impersonate departed human beings for the purpose of entrapping the souls of those who sought the communication.

These facts amply justify Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in his contention that the Christian Churches could adopt his doctrine of spiritualism without abandoning any of their vital beliefs. The so-called new revelation is reconcilable with all the orthodox doctrines except, apparently, that of eternal torment in hell. This dreadful superstition, however, has already been abandoned in practice by every Christian sect — even by those which still retain it as part of the accepted dogmas. Nobody really believes it; for the test of a real belief is that men are ready to act upon it. And who, in any Christian body, from Roman Catholic to Sandemanian, would now act upon the belief that human creatures are to be tormented to all eternity by a vengeful God? What believer would not far sooner abandon all connection with his religion than bow the knee to a world despot so immeasurably more evil than the worst of men?

It is no unfair disparagement of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's two little books, *The New Revelation* and *The Vital Message*, to say that they interest us chiefly because they are his. We recognize in them the fervent and sincere profession of faith of a man to whom the public is deeply indebted. This debt entitles Sir Arthur to a respectful hearing for any views he may place before us. But certainly these two pamphlets would neither have

merited nor received any general attention were it not for the high regard in which their author is justly held.

They do not profess to offer very much in the way of evidence; and what they do offer is only the same kind of insufficiently authenticated wonder-stories that have been submitted by the hundred in earlier books. Not a single episode is substantiated with such cogency as to compel belief. Even where the witness is Sir Arthur himself, the possibilities of error, or deception, or unwarranted conclusion, are by no means excluded. Nobody, therefore, who has previously familiarized himself with the testimony of Sir Oliver Lodge, Admiral Moore, and Mr. J. Arthur Hill, or the weighty volumes of Myers, and has failed to be convinced by them, will be convinced by Sir Arthur; and, on the other hand, those who have been persuaded of the spiritualistic doctrine by earlier writers, will find in Sir Arthur's pages little to reinforce their faith.

Nobody will be convinced, that is, except the kind of person who believes upon untested authority. Our spiritualistic friends are wont to appeal to the universal tendency to such belief. They are extremely fond of drawing up their lists of eminent persons who are declared to have accepted spiritualism, and they assure us that the list is constantly growing. If notable names ought to settle it, we might perhaps congratulate the spiritualists on being able to cite as respectable a list as the followers of many another cult. But this ought clearly not to be the case. Where questions of experienced fact are concerned, requiring for their investigation and interpretation powers not possessed by the untrained layman, the laity are bound, by every canon of intellectual honour, to keep an open

mind until there is a virtually unanimous pronouncement by all the competent.

This question of intellectual ethics is grossly neglected nowadays. We imagine that we live in an age of free thought and private judgment, yet there never was a time when credulity and the unquestioning acceptance of authority were more widespread. One is sometimes tempted to endorse the harsh judgment of Swift, that "the bulk of men are as well qualified for flying as for thinking." Without going this length, it must be insisted that many people fail to distinguish between matters on which they are competent to investigate and form a judgment, and those (necessarily, in every individual's case, the vast majority) on which they are entirely incompetent, and must, therefore, suspend judgment until the competent have agreed upon a verdict.

Upon authority all of us hold, and must hold, the majority of our beliefs. But for this very reason, wherever important questions are concerned, we must investigate, with microscopic closeness, the qualifications of the authorities we are to follow. We actually accept many beliefs that contradict the testimony of our senses; but these are beliefs on which we have the independent assurance of unanimous multitudes of persons trained to investigate the evidence involved. Nobody boggles at the statement that the earth goes round the sun, though we daily see the sun going round the earth "afore our very eyes." We all accept the Newtonian formula defining the conditions under which bodies in space attract each other, although not one man in a million has made, or knows how to make, experiments to verify this formula.

To-day we are being told that certain ranges of experience, now for the first time accessible to mathematical astronomers, are inharmonious with the Newtonian formula; and Professor Einstein of Berlin is presenting, to the handful of experts who can follow him and check his calculations, new doctrines of the relativity of space and motion, which may in time become familiar as household words to the laity, and be accepted by them with the same unquestioning faith that they now extend to the long-established doctrines of Copernicus and Newton. For we all rightly feel that if the data of Professor Einstein have been accurately observed and interpreted, his conclusions must in time compel the assent of every competent mathematician, physicist and astronomer. Then belief will be compulsory upon the laity; but until this happens, we, the incompetent majority, must refrain from denying or affirming doctrines that we can neither understand nor assess.

Such is also the attitude compulsory upon us with regard to authority for the phenomena of spiritualism. A certain number of men, eminent in various sciences, not only accept the phenomena as genuine, but also (and this is a very different matter) agree with Messrs. Lodge and Doyle as to their interpretation. But this cannot entitle us to say that we believe either facts or interpretation for ourselves. A far larger number of eminent scientific men either question or reject the alleged facts and utterly repel the offered interpretation. But neither does this entitle us to say that the spiritualists are totally deceived as to the facts, or that their interpretation is for ever inadmissible.

It is here, however, that we encounter a startling peculiarity in the spiritualistic argument; a peculiarity that

characterizes the writings of Messrs. Lodge and Doyle as strongly as it does those of the mass of spiritualists, who have no such claim upon our attention as these two eminent gentlemen. The peculiarity is this: Our authors profess to be strictly scientific in temper and method. They care only for truth. The question of the agreeableness or disagreeableness of doctrines (they say) does not concern them. "Things are what they are," etc. If truth turns out to be pleasant, well and good; but they are out for truth and not for pleasantness. Yet, taking this lofty stand, *they do not appeal to the consensus of the competent. They address their appeal to the man in the street*, upon the astonishing assumption that Tom, Dick and Harry are competent to investigate the phenomena for themselves and reach a valid conclusion!

Now, really, this naïve assumption is almost enough by itself to destroy the scientific credit of the men who make it. I, at least, shall not think it necessary here to adduce any further argument (on the strictly scientific ground) against the advocates of spiritualism. Nobody doubts the entire good faith with which men like Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle report their experience. We respect them, as we have always done, because they have given us good grounds for doing so. They are honorable and truthful men who believe what they say they believe, and have been convinced by what they take to be compelling evidence. But when they say to us, "Investigate the matter for yourself and you will believe as we believe," anybody who (like myself) knows that he is utterly incompetent to make such an investigation, and that his opinion either *pro* or *con.*, if rendered, would be scientific

cally worthless, must be left wondering whether Messrs. Lodge and Doyle have not perhaps made the same mistake about themselves as they make about the man in the street.

On this point let us listen to a witness whose credit stands high with spiritualists: the late William James. In an essay on "What Psychical Research has Accomplished," included in his volume *The Will to Believe, and Other Essays*, he deals with a report on the investigation of the "physical phenomena" of mediumship (slate-writing, furniture-moving, etc.); and his comment is as follows:

"This, so far as it goes, is destructive of the claims of all the mediums examined. 'Mr. Davey' himself produced fraudulent slate-writing of the highest order, while Mr. Hodgson, a 'sitter' in his confidence, reviewed the written reports of the series of his other sitters, — all of them intelligent persons, — and showed that in every case they failed to see the essential features of what was done before their eyes. This Davey-Hodgson contribution is probably the most damaging document concerning eye-witnesses' evidence that has ever been produced."

That is the point! "*Intelligent persons . . . failed to see the essential features of what was done before their eyes.*" The proper inference from this is not the one commonly drawn by the advocates of spiritualism; namely, that, while conscious fraud does occur, there are many cases in which it does not, and the average witness can trust his own impressions whenever he is sufficiently assured that conscious fraud is absent. The proper inference is that the testimony of average witnesses, in all cases involving

the so-called "supernormal," is *worthless*. Knowing that any good conjurer could deceive me, I also know that I might make gross mistakes in testifying to any occurrence of this order. I once saw Mr. Maskelyne, on a well-lighted stage, before a large audience, produce the phenomenon of "materialization." He sat there in his chair, simulating sleep or trance. I saw a white cloud emerge from his side and gradually take the definite shape of a young woman, who proceeded to walk about the stage and to talk. Then the young woman's form gradually faded again into the cloud, which was apparently re-absorbed into the side of Mr. Maskelyne. The whole thing was an admitted conjuring trick. But if Mr. Maskelyne, instead of being the honorable man he was, had chosen to perform this trick in the darkened cabinet of the ordinary medium, and to maintain that it was produced not by his own exceedingly clever manipulation, but by the action of disembodied spirits, multitudes would have been deceived by him. Nor can I be certain that I should have ventured to disbelieve completely. Whoever has attended to the psychological experiments by which the human capacity for self-deception and being deceived is demonstrated, knows that that capacity is very highly developed; and that, whenever uncommon matters are concerned, or whenever important conclusions depend upon scrupulous accuracy in the reporting of facts, qualifications far beyond those of mere good faith and general intelligence in the witnesses are required.

One of these qualifications is the power to distinguish clearly between an observed fact and theories of its meaning. Scientific experiments are like Nebuchadnezzar's

dream — Daniel must first tell the dream before he goes on to the interpretation. The business of the observer is to report *what happens*, and not to substitute (even unconsciously) a theory of the meaning of what happens. To offer us a mass of data, every item of which was interpreted at the moment of its occurrence in the light of a foregone conclusion, is the opposite of scientific.¹ Now, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's evidence, and Sir Oliver Lodge's, and Admiral Moore's, is all of this nature. This is where it differs from the bulk of the carefully prepared testimony of the Society for Psychical Research, which is of such a nature that a competent mind like that of William James, although strongly predisposed to accept the spiritualistic hypothesis if demonstrated, remained to the end unconvinced.

¹ As when, for instance, in *Raymond* we find reports of table-tilting sessions containing such statements as these: "The table began to move, and Lady Lodge asked: 'Raymond, darling, is that you?' (*The table rocked three times.*) Lady Lodge: 'That is good of you, because Woodie did so want you to come.' (*The table rocked to and fro with a pleased motion, most difficult to express on paper.*)" Lady Lodge's instantaneous assumption that the movement of the table was an answer to her question, and an answer from a person already assumed to be present, totally destroys the credibility of any testimony from her on this subject. A little later, "The table began to show signs of *restlessness* . . . so Lady Lodge said, 'Do you want to send a message?' 'Yes.'" (The "Yes" here means either that the table rocked or that raps were heard.) Again, "*He showed great delight*" . . . "*and he and we all laughed together.*" One can almost hear that restless table laughing. In a later session, we read that "The table shook as if laughing." We all know how those jolly old tables will shake their sides when they are thoroughly amused; but this one was exceptionally risible and communicative. There has been nothing quite equal to it since Tom Smart's chair.

Now, James, who remained in doubt, was a psychologist. This leads us to ask our spiritualistic friends a further question. Why is it that all the eminent scientific men who have embraced their doctrine are specialists in departments of knowledge and research that do not deal with specifically mental questions? Suppose a psychologist came to Sir Oliver Lodge with a revolutionary theory regarding some leading problem of physics: say, the structure of the atom. The eminent physicist would very rightly reply, "We cannot accept untested conclusions based on the researches of an amateur. Give us your data. If you have discovered facts we had overlooked, we will investigate them. But their verification, their co-ordination with the stock of facts on which physics is built, and their value for general scientific theory — these must be left to the specialists." So, too, if a geologist or mathematician were to inform Dr. Conan Doyle that he had discovered a cure for cancer or tuberculosis, the distinguished spiritualist, being by profession a physician, would reply in a similar strain. It is an inevitable result of the vast, detailed development of the sciences that specialization is now carried to lengths formerly undreamed of, and that no man, however gifted, can be an authority of rank in more than one. Psychology and the related sciences — psychiatry, neurology, and the rest — are no exceptions to this rule. Why then must the psychologist take the word of physicists and physicians, however eminent, for facts and theories regarding the psyche, which is his special departmental subject-matter?

It is not from any feeling that they are incredibly wonderful or "miraculous" that one declines to accept the

ill-attested and unverified spiritualistic revelations. On the contrary, they are not a whit more astonishing than many of the commonest facts of daily life would be were it not for the dulling effect of familiarity. Speech, for instance, if we stop to consider it, is as mysterious as any alleged happening of the séance-room. The genesis of ideas is quite inexplicable, to begin with. But that, having come by an idea, I should be able to translate it into an agreed code of symbols, consisting of atmospheric vibrations propagated by my vocal organs; which symbols, utterly heterogeneous to what they stand for, should re-translate themselves, after their impact upon the ears of another, into the selfsame idea that had arisen in my mind — this is one of the standing miracles of our self-conscious life. *That* it happens, we all know. *How* it is possible is a root problem for philosophy. The making of the code of language involves one of those blank self-contradictions that human intelligence can but stare at dumbly. Men made language in order that they might communicate; yet they must have been in the fullest communication before they could make language. The evolutionary explanation, here as elsewhere, is a kindly attempt to make the miracle swallowable by breaking it up into capsule doses. Yet it can do no more than disguise and becloud the fact that the process by which self-conscious beings are alleged to have come by the powers they now possess was a process only rendered possible by their prior possession and exercise of those selfsame powers.

But the fact that a given happening is inexplicable does not justify us in accepting the first crude theory about it offered by men who (like Messrs. Lodge and Doyle) are

admittedly not expert specialists in the field of experience within which it falls. And in this matter of mediumistic phenomena and the question of the identity of "spirit communicators," the laity will rightly attach greater weight to the judgment of one competent psychologist or psychiatrist than to that of a score of physicists or medical men, however eminent in their own departments. When we observe the laxity with which facts are reported, and the headlong fashion in which the spiritistic explanation is invoked, by Messrs. Lodge and Doyle, we find that suspended judgment is forced upon us. Dr. Doyle writes without the least regard to the phenomena of dual and multiple personality, or to the possibility of unconscious memory. His one critical principle is, — Either conscious fraud or disembodied intelligence.

Imagine the cry of triumph we should have heard from him, or from Sir Oliver Lodge, if either of them had encountered in a séance-room such a manifestation as that described by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria*.¹ This was the case of a "young woman of four or five and twenty, who could neither read nor write," and who, in a "nervous fever," "continued incessantly talking Latin, Greek and Hebrew, in very pompous tones and with most distinct enunciation." Now the test question of Messrs. Lodge and Doyle, in the case of any medium, is this: Is the subject-matter of the trance communication beyond the normal knowledge or capacity of the medium? If so, it must come from some other mind. If this other mind cannot possibly be that of one of the persons present (in which case "telepathy" is held to be ruled out), then

¹ Chapter vi, p. 58 ff. in Dent's "Everyman" edition.

clearly it must be that of another agency, present, living, invisible; in other words, the surviving, communicating spirit of an ex-human being.

Well, Coleridge's case satisfies all these tests. His German peasant girl, in her normal mind, knew no word of Latin or Greek or Hebrew; yet in her delirious or trance condition she indubitably delivered many sentences of all three languages. These she could not have cribbed by "telepathy" from the nurse or doctor, for they also were ignorant of the said languages. Her Roman Catholic neighbours reasoned exactly as our spiritualistic authorities reason, except that they posited devils as "inspirers" instead of ex-human beings. Unfortunately for the miracle, however, the young physician who was attending the girl investigated her antecedents, and found that in childhood (from nine years old onwards) she had been an inmate of the household of an old Protestant pastor, whose custom it had been, for years, "to walk up and down a passage of his house into which the kitchen door opened, and to read to himself with a loud voice out of his favorite books." "He was a very learned man and a great Hebraist. Among his books were found a collection of Rabbinical writings, together with several of the Greek and Latin Fathers; and the physician succeeded in identifying so many passages with those taken down at the young woman's bedside, that no doubt could remain in any rational mind concerning the true origin of the impressions made on her nervous system."

Thus it was a clear case of unconscious memory, a phenomenon experienced by all of us in some degree; as, for instance, when we find running through our heads the air of a song, or passages from a piece of music, which

we have not voluntarily called up, and may not even remember to have heard. Now but for the persistent scepticism of the physician in this case, Coleridge's story would have been a better bit of evidence for spiritualism than anything adduced by Messrs. Lodge and Doyle. Yet their interpretation would have been totally unwarranted.

Sir Oliver Lodge, then, really ought not to be so impatient as he is with the scepticism of the public, seeing that the public has before it such standing reminders of the unjustifiability of hasty conclusions, and such proofs of the inaccuracy of the reasoning he is always using. The public recognizes (as the spiritualists do not) its own incompetence for the difficult scientific experiments necessary for such investigations. The public takes note of the solemn assurances of Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, the learned secretary of the Society for Psychical Research, that "almost every medium, who has been prominently before the public, has at some time or other been detected in fraud, or what cannot be distinguished from fraud except on some violently improbable hypothesis," and that "the most excellent moral character in the medium is no guarantee against trickery, unless it can be proved that he was in no abnormal mental condition when the phenomena occurred; and extraordinary deceptions are known to have been carried on by hysterical patients and others, with no apparent motive."¹

Under these circumstances, the laity who are aware of their incompetence (this being the point that distinguishes them from the convinced amateurs who have accepted spiritualism) are neither wilful nor unduly hard-headed

¹ Article "Spiritualism," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

in withholding their assent. Why should not an international commission of psychologists and psychiatrists be formed, equipped with ample funds and apparatus, with power to summon witnesses, and given as much time as might prove necessary for their investigation? If such a commission examined, over a period of years, all the mediums and psychics, professional and unprofessional, in this country and in Europe and Asia, and rendered a unanimous judgment as to the precise nature of the facts investigated, and as to the interpretation of such facts which strict scientific methods justified, the public would be content to accept its verdict. Nothing short of such a verdict by such a commission of impartial experts ever will satisfy, or ought to satisfy, the public mind.

It may not be superfluous (though it ought to be) to insist once more on a point commonly overlooked by spiritualists; namely, that even the establishment as fact of all that is claimed for spiritualism would not prove human immortality. If Sir Oliver Lodge has really received messages from his son Raymond — that same gallant lad whose body was shattered in Flanders Fields — we then have proof of individual survival; but none that such survival will endure everlastingly. The fact that I am alive on earth to-day is no proof that I shall be so living fifty or a hundred years hence; rather, in view of normal experience, it is a proof that I shall not; and if Raymond Lodge, once dead, is alive to-day, that fact would not show that he will not have met a second and permanent death a year or a thousand years hence.

Per contra, absence of proof of communication, and therefore of survival, is not equivalent to disproof of

survival or of immortality. If what Sir Oliver Lodge takes for messages from Raymond should be proved to be a *mélange* of "telepathy," multiple personality, and unconscious cerebration, on the part of mediums and the Lodge family, it would not follow that Raymond is not alive. Your failure to receive a letter from your son last heard of in Australia does not at all prove that he is not living there.

Let us, then, leave the question of fact, which is undecided and must for the present remain so; and let us take our stand on the sound ethical principle that the question whether we as individuals are to live for ever *ought* to make no difference to our conduct. For the question, What is my duty to my neighbour? depends on my neighbour's present nature and needs, not upon whether either he or I is to be alive next week or next millennium. It is a question of what I now owe to him and to myself. This ethical question ought never to be confused with the question of fact raised by the discussion of spiritualism. Nor should we allow ourselves to fall into the muddle of thinking that the worth of life depends upon its length. The kind of character that can be, and sometimes has been, manifested in this brief life is the highest conceivable product of even an everlasting existence. It is a sort of blasphemy against the intimations of inherent divinity, which we have all seen in human nature, to declare that life is turned to dust and ashes unless we can be assured of a renewal of the conscious individual companionship of the noble dead. If this is to come, well and good; but if not, it is also well. For to have known such spirits is the supreme blessing of our life.

VIII

*MILITARY DUTY AND THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR*¹

(1917)

I. THE RIGHTS OF MAN

THERE is nothing over which the average man is more insistent and emphatic than the assertion of what he calls his rights. Yet, if one of these loud protesters were asked to state the natural or the logical ground upon which his rights rest, he would either lapse into confusion or else assert some basis which a moment's analysis

¹ I reproduce this Essay as it was first printed in October, 1917, because it seems to me most necessary in peace-time to clear up the tremendous moral problems involved in war and the participation therein of peace-loving citizens. The Great War caught us intellectually and ethically as unprepared as we were in the material sense. None of us had thought out the question of the relation of our rights to our duties; nor were we ready to give a reasoned answer to the conscientious objector. This seemed to me lamentable, and I accordingly attempted in this paper to supply what was lacking. The fact that the Secretary for War did me the honour of requesting a copy of my obscure Essay for his own use shows how scarce was anything like competent treatment of the subject. We all hope that there will be no more wars; but even if there are to be none, we must think out all the moral and practical problems involved, and determine the questions of right and wrong, as well in the conditions which have to be removed in order to prevent war, as in those with which the imminence or the actual occurrence of war confronts the citizen. I therefore have not removed from this Essay even the brief references it contains to the actual quarrel

would knock to pieces. What could be more naïve than the attitude in this matter of the average free thinker? He has gaily shattered the entire philosophy upon which the assertion of human rights was formerly based, and has in most cases embraced a doctrine which frankly — indeed, with earnest insistence — places men on the same footing as the lower animals. Yet he is probably more vigorous than anybody else in his demand for those rights which were deduced from the rank given to man by the old theological conception, but which modern evolutionism, if associated either with a materialism of the Ernst Haeckel type or with the doctrine of Nietzsche, has left without a shadow of rational basis. For Nietzsche, man has no rights. The tiny minority who, under the name of supermen, are to run the world will find their sanction exclusively within themselves, and there not in the form of what we understand by moral justification, but in the form simply of power. If for them there is any right, it is a right that might makes. For the rest, the philosophy of Nietzsche is in plain language one of slavery; and it is hard to see how any doctrine which abolishes the radical difference between man and the products of sub-human nature can evade such a conclusion.

I do not think, however, that the alternative is to give up either the belief in rights or the exercise of freedom of thought. It is my conviction that the fullest and most thorough exercise of free rationality will revindicate com-

between this country and Germany which was being fought out when it was written. If my Essay serves only to focus attention on the problem, in the calm and dispassionate atmosphere of peace, then, whatever its inadequacies, it may be of some value. (December, 1922.)

pletely the distinction between man and sub-human nature, even though the fact should be established that among the higher animals there is already incipient that rationality in virtue of which man is able to distinguish himself from the world — indeed, by the exercise of which, in a very real sense, he “makes nature.” But a statement of the reasons for this belief would take us too far astray into the field of metaphysics and epistemology. For the present, therefore, I must be content to draw attention to the confusion imported into the doctrine of the Rights of Man by the modern contractual theory of society. The great thinkers by whom this theory was elaborated (chiefly Spinoza, Hobbes and Rousseau), amid many differences of detail, agreed in the central idea that the powers of sovereignty now exercised by governments were originally possessed as rights by individuals in isolation, and were delegated by them to a sovereign, in the form of a contract freely entered into, but irrevocable when established.

Probably no human being now believes that such a handing over of their powers by originally autonomous individuals to any kind of sovereign ever took place as an historic fact. We know that civilization did not begin in this way, but in a precisely opposite manner. Nevertheless, the idea still prevails, and probably is more widely current in America than in any other country, that the myth of the social contract is an accurate *imaginative projection*, a correct *picture*, of the relation that subsists between individuals and society, and still more between individuals and the State. Such a myth was at work, whether consciously or unconsciously, in the minds of the men by whom the Declaration of Independence was framed. The

language of that document unmistakably implies that men existed and possessed rights prior to society, and that when they came together to live in society, they parted only with some few of their rights and retained all the rest in full force against the community.

Now the first step towards a scientific theory of politics must be to get rid of every trace of this idea. The doctrine of the social contract, and the conception of the relation between individuals and the community which it implies, are false in any form in which they are capable of being stated. To reach the beginning of a verifiable doctrine on the subject, we have to turn aside from Spinoza, Hobbes and Rousseau, and betake ourselves to the great Greek thinkers. Both in Plato and Aristotle we find it laid down as a root principle that the State is prior to the individual. Disputable as this is when the word "State" is used, we have only to substitute either the word "society" or "community" to reduce it to an unassailable truth. To be sure, when we try to track down in thought the Greek conception we find ourselves ending in paradox, since the community of course consists of individuals, even while it is the precondition of the possibility of there being an individual. But this is nothing against it, since owing to the limitations both of our mental powers and of our information, we are equally forced into paradox in every inquiry in which we try to trail things back to their origins. The plain fact is that man as we know him is always a product of society, and is as utterly inconceivable apart from a community of persons of like rational nature as a wave apart from the sea, or as a sunbeam without the sun. His mind and its necessary

instrument, language, imply a prior society as certainly as his body implies two human parents. It is not only not good, but not possible for man to be alone. The individual by his very existence presupposes the organized group, tribe or nation; and it is in and through his relation to this that he comes to have both rights and duties.

That a right is thus something springing out of the relations between persons in society seems to be admitted by common speech. Nobody ever thinks of there being such a thing as a right possessed by men against any but human agents. If, for example, a human being is destroyed by a flash of lightning, or by wild beasts or disease germs, it never occurs to us to regard such an accident as a violation of right. If it did, this could only be on the supposition that the natural forces in question were wielded by a superhuman person, who, however, being a person — that is to say, an agent of essentially the same nature as man — could be only an extension of human society; and any rights possessed by man against him would be of the same nature as those accruing to men through their relations to each other.

In sum, then, we may say (borrowing the illustration from Thomas Hill Green, one of the deepest and clearest thinkers on the root problems of ethics and politics who have written in the English tongue), that our rights are as truly the outcome of our social relations as the gravity of any body in space is the outcome of its relations to other bodies.¹

¹ See Green's *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, an invaluable work, which, though it demands very close thought, deserves to be mastered by every student of the subject. It is published in a slender volume of 252 pages by Longmans.

But if this be so, what fact is it in the mutual relations of men that constitutes the basis of rights? It is the fact that men, by virtue of their common nature as rational wills, are capable of conceiving and of pursuing a good common to themselves and others. At one end of the scale we find this in the realization of joint interest among members of a single family; at the other end we find it in the conviction, gradually forced upon us both by reason and experience, that the true good of men individually is also the good of mankind universally, and that no man's highest end can ever be attained unless and until the highest end of the human race as a whole is attained jointly with it.

A right, then, is to be defined as "a power capable of direction by reference to a common good." The exercise of every such power is man's right. And since it is by virtue of his rational nature that man thus conceives his actual and possible part in the world, the rights thus arising may be designated as "natural rights." But if they are so designated, it must be upon the strict understanding that the word "natural" does not here refer to the physical world, nor to anything that man shares in common with those animals in whom no trace of the distinctive human power is discoverable. Indeed, for the sake of clear thinking, it would be better to stop talking of man's rights as natural, since their very essence is that power by virtue of which man opposes nature to himself as the object of his thought, and which therefore cannot in any sense be regarded as a product of its object. Nature is a process of change, which no jugglery can metamorphose into the *consciousness* of a process of change; and that

consciousness of nature as a process is the distinctive reality of man.

Now, if the definition of a right as "a power capable of direction by reference to a common good" be accepted, it becomes obvious that rights and duties go together, that every right is the correlative of a duty, and *vice versâ* — duty arising directly out of the rational nature of man and the fact of his unchangeable intrication in a network of spiritual life. Wherever there is a right, there is a duty; wherever there is a duty, there is a right.

II. SOCIETY AND THE STATE

This little plunge into the underlying principles of ethics and politics seemed necessary in order to get rid of the notion, which is implied in so much of the talk we hear about rights, that men possess a right "to do as they like" except where this is arbitrarily limited by the action of the State, such action being usually an exercise of tyranny. No man has, or ever had, or ever can have, any such right. Nor has any man rights against society; such a phrase being, indeed, a contradiction in terms, as though one should speak of the rights of a branch against the tree.

Another preliminary consideration is necessary; — a distinction, namely, between society and the State. These terms are very far from being synonymous, and the State is very far from being vested with all the powers and all the authority of society. The State is an instrument of the general will, created for certain ends. Like all instruments, it is modifiable in form, and the functions with which it is entrusted may vary from age to age and from nation to nation, in correspondence with differences of

experience and of national exigency. In countries where, as in Germany, the State is considered omniscient, and an artificial and untenable antithesis is set up between it and the individual, the instrument of the general will becomes its tyrant. Indeed, some German thinkers have gone the length of endowing the State with the attributes of God; and this generation has seen the German Government virtually arrogating to itself the powers of divine omniscience, and going even beyond them, by assuming the right to dispense itself and its agents from the inabdicable obligations of the moral law.

The intolerable absurdities to which such a doctrine leads demonstrate its falsity, and we are forced back to a view of the State corresponding to that conception of rights which emerged from our previous argument. The State is ideally "the reconciler and sustainer of the rights that arise out of the social relations of men." This definition (which is Green's) limits the State to the duty of promoting the common good. It leaves open the very large question as to what things a government may rightly do in the effort to attain such common good; but, by excluding the State from pursuing or commanding anything inconsistent with this end, it destroys the possibility of converting the instrument into a tyrant or a god.

The question as to what are the proper functions of a government constitutes the subject-matter of the endless debate between Individualists, Socialists, Syndicalists and the like. I shall not now trespass upon this field, except by pointing out that the foregoing definitions of right and of the State furnish the criterion by which it must be settled. This canon is: How is the good of all best pro-

moted? — which means, being interpreted, how are individuals most effectively developed and differentiated, transformed into personalities, and thereby made most capable of actualizing, in themselves and in others, the highest good possible to man? The Individualist is emphatically right in asserting that the highest differentiation of personality is the end to be pursued. On the other hand, the Socialist is assuredly no less right in maintaining that such a limitation of the powers of government as most Individualists propose is fatal to the attainment of their object. But if we follow the first principle laid down by that prince of individualists, Herbert Spencer — which is that there is always “a soul of truth in things erroneous” — we shall be led to the conclusion that in a true and final doctrine of the sphere of government, there will be a reconciliation of the end set up by the Individualist with some of the means recommended by the Socialist.

Before passing to the specific question of military duty, we must attempt to smooth out one further confusion which is enfolded in the vague idea of men's having a right to do as they like except in so far as they have contracted themselves out of it. This confusion relates to the meaning of “consent,” as that word is generally used in defining democracy. “Governments,” says Mr. Wilson, echoing what all Americans have always thought and said, “derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed.”¹ Undoubtedly. But the phrase masks an ambiguity which must be drawn out and removed. The powers of governments are not derived from the consent of the governed *to their existence*. In democracies

¹ Address to the Senate, January 22, 1917.

they are, and everywhere they should be, derived from the consent of the governed *to their exercise* by specific persons appointed by popular consent. The powers which governments of every kind exercise exist by necessity; they inhere in society as a consequence of the rational and social nature of man, and of the rights and duties which spring from it. Always and everywhere they are wielded by some persons — though not necessarily by officials of the State. What is essential to democracy is the recognition that sovereignty resides diffusedly in the whole people, and consequently that the functions of government should be exercised only by agents authorized by the people.

III. CONSCRIPTION AND THE CONSTITUTION

Among the powers which exist because they must, and without the possession and potential exercise of which by authorized agents no society would ever have been possible, is that of defense against external aggression. The first and most indispensable of the rights commonly regarded as natural are, in Spinoza's words, "peace and safety of life," *pax vitaeque securitas*. The recognition of these rights does not mean that men, being (in Hobbes's phrase) "enemies by nature," discovered the intolerableness of perpetual insecurity and constant fighting each for his own hand, and therefore contracted together to vest the business of fighting and securing peace in a specific authority. It does mean that without peace and security men could not be truly human; which is to say that they could not enjoy those relations necessary to the joint pursuit of that single object, their own and the common good.

But to say that all men possess a right to peace and safety is only another way of saying that the duty of securing these things devolves upon every man. We must once for all rid our minds of the fallacy that hides behind the title of Herbert Spencer's indignant defense of Individualism, *The Man versus the State*. The antithesis is an impossible one; and all our thinking must remain confused and erroneous so long as we imply that the State does not consist of men, but is, in some unthinkable way, an imposed alien power. The State consists of all of us; in particular, it consists of those of our number to whom we delegate the business of legislation and government. "The Man *versus* the State," therefore, can only mean some men *versus* other men, employers *versus* employees, principals *versus* agents. Even in these words the antithesis is much more clearly cut than it ever can be in life; since as voters and taxpayers, not to mention thinkers and creators of public sentiment, we all participate, in an undefined but highly important degree, in the actual functions of the State, even though these appear to be wholly delegated to legislative and executive officials. To say, then, that we expect the State to ensure peace and security of life to us is to say in other words that *we are singly and jointly responsible for the acquisition or preservation of those blessings*.

As soon as we have blown aside the cloud engendered by the atomistic theory of society, it becomes apparent that to deny the general duty of serving in the gaining of peace and security is equivalent to denying the right of enjoying them; and actually (as I shall proceed to show), a state of war, by which the right to peace and safety is

endangered, does bring the entire nation into service in defense of the threatened right, whether its armed forces be recruited by means of conscription, or by what is very misleadingly called the voluntary system. This is by right, as well as in fact, the result of a state of war. To say that the United States is at war is not to say that the President and Cabinet and Congress are at war, nor merely that the army and navy are; it is to say that every man and woman in the nation, and even every child capable of the least degree of social service, is engaged in the conflict. Nor is there any moral difference between the various means necessary to the end which the entire nation is thus pursuing.

Before attempting to elucidate this argument in further detail, I desire in passing to remind the reader that universal liability to actual military service has always formed a part of the supreme law of the United States. By that law above all statutes which we call our Constitution (the acceptance of which, explicitly or by implication, is involved in the possession of citizenship), the right of the duly constituted authorities to call every able-bodied person into military service is explicitly affirmed. The recent Act of Congress authorizing a selective conscription for the purpose of the present war has in some quarters been attacked as unconstitutional, notwithstanding that on at least one previous occasion a measure embodying the same principle was passed and enforced. But what reader of the Constitution can doubt that the power to pass such Acts is in the plainest possible language conferred by that instrument upon Congress? The relevant phrases are the following:

SECTION 8. — The Congress shall have power . . .

To define and punish piracies and felonies committed on the high seas, and offenses against the law of nations;

To declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water;

To raise and support armies. . . .

To provide and maintain a navy;

To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces; . . .

To provide for organizing, arming and disciplining the militia, *and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States.* . . .

To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any department or officer thereof.

If under this authority Congress is not empowered to enlist soldiers and sailors, on any principle it may consider necessary, and send them into any part of the world where its war is to be waged, then language has no meaning.

In the present state of the world, to rob Congress of this authority would entail the certainty of foreign conquest. It is nothing but a piece of good fortune that we happen now, after war has been declared, to have time and opportunity to train and equip troops undisturbed. We owe this good fortune to the armies of our Allies, and

to the British navy. But, even under these circumstances, it has been demonstrated that had the Government been obliged to raise an army in competition with the labor market, we should have found ourselves in an *impasse*. We never could have enlisted the needed men, and even in the vain attempt to do so we should have disorganized the whole industrial system of the country and bankrupted the treasury.

Surely it is not unjust to contend that whoever objects to the possession and exercise by the Government of coercive powers for military purposes ought in time of peace to have agitated for a change in this part of the Constitution. On the other hand, whoever during peace time refrained from doing so, but suddenly discovers that he disapproves of this power when it is about to be exercised, ought in common decency to hold his peace. No doubt there is such a thing as a duty of revolution, which arises *when there are no legal or constitutional means of effecting a change desired by a majority in the interest of all*. If a majority does not desire the change, and yet those demanding it attempt to effect it without first persuading the majority to agree with them, they are flatly repudiating the principle of democracy. Wherever there are constitutional ways of effecting an alteration in any law, organic or statutory — wherever a convinced majority can have its will, as in this country it can — there is no reason (consistent with democracy) for resorting to revolutionary methods. Persons who lived under the Constitution and never questioned it so long as peace was preserved and all went well with them, but who in time of war suddenly threaten revolt against a proper exercise of the

powers of Congress, are not only revolutionaries. They are also, in the exact legal sense of the term, traitors, in that (though they may be unaware of the fact, or may not expressly intend it) they are giving aid to the enemies of the country.

IV. THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR TO ALL KILLING

This brings us to the difficult and interesting problem presented by the "conscientious objector." That term covers at least two distinct sets of persons, though only one of them is recognized by the law. The one is the kind of person whose religious creed prohibits him, under any possible circumstances, from taking human life. The other is the person who, without holding such a creed, is convinced that our part in this particular war is unjustified, and therefore refuses to shed blood in our country's present quarrel.

With regard to the former type, the law is, in my judgment, wise in the tolerance it extends to him. A person who has always, in good faith, held the conviction that nothing can justify the taking of life, and has not trumped it up to excuse himself on the present occasion, ought, I believe, to be exempted from actual fighting, though not from any other part of war service. I make this limitation because the conscientious objection is admittedly only to the act of killing, and does not involve a conviction that the country's general attitude in taking up its present quarrel has been wrong. Such was the express argument of the English Quakers, who at the beginning of the war publicly proclaimed their readiness to do everything but

fight. Hosts of them are at the front, engaged in every kind of relief work and service to the combatants. Many others are serving on mine-sweepers, the most horribly dangerous of all forms of sea service. There can be no question of cowardice in persons who are ready to accept these obscure but perilous and heroic tasks.

Yet, though the law rightly respects their conscience, it does not follow that the rest of us can admire their reasoning; and hereby hangs a very important argument. *All necessary means to the same end are morally on exactly the same footing with each other and with the end they subserve.* The end which this country is pursuing, in common with her Allies, is, by destroying the lives of the enemy, to bring him to the frame of mind in which he will be willing to make the kind of peace we want, or to reduce him to a position in which he will be compelled to do so. *All means indispensable to that end and consistent with it* share the moral character of the end itself. If it is right, such means are right; if wrong, such means are wrong — all of them in the same way and to the same extent.

Warned by previous misunderstanding of one's plainest and most carefully chosen words, I cannot too emphatically insist that in saying this I am not preaching or assenting to the doctrine that "the end justifies the means." To any end there are always various possible means, some of which may be chosen and others not. That a means may be justified, *the end must be right, the means consistent with it and indispensable to it.* Thus it is right for me to enter a friend's house — right because he desires it, and because on my part it is an act of deference

to him; but it is not right for me to smash his window and effect an entrance in that way. Or, to take the interesting point of casuistry raised by Mr. Samuel Weller, it is right that one should desire to cure a boy of squinting, but not that one should cut off his head in order to do so.

The question has in the past been debated among theologians whether it can ever be right to lie for the glory of God; to which the proper answer (assuming the theologians' premises) would be that, since God is Truth, the supposed means is inconsistent with and destructive of the end. If you lie, it cannot be for God's glory. Indeed, one might almost be justified in inverting the famous maxim, and saying that *the means justify the end*; in the sense that unless the means are right in themselves, the end, with which they must be consistent and to which they must be indispensable, cannot be right. Assuming any end to have been adopted by the will, then every one of the means, consistent with it, which in the nature of the case are indispensable for reaching it, have precisely the same moral character with the end itself.

But if this argument is sound, observe the inevitable consequence. *There is no ethical difference between making a surgical bandage for a wounded man, or knitting a trench helmet for a soldier, or growing corn to feed the army or to feed those who in any way are serving it, and killing an enemy with one's own hands, in the field or at sea.* Now every one of us, willy-nilly, is in some way or other contributing to the maintenance and success of the armed forces of the United States. We, therefore, who do not kill directly, do so through our agents; and to act through another is, morally as well as legally, on a

parity with acting oneself. It seems to me important that others besides conscientious objectors should learn to realize the full force of this argument. The women, and the men too old to go, or who for any other reason remain at home, need not thank God that they are spared the actual guilt of the fighting — assuming it for the moment to be guilt. Whoever turns over a finger to aid in any way in the struggle has every whit as much responsibility as the artilleryman who mows down the German ranks, or the aviator who drops a bomb on a hostile cantonment and kills a hundred or a thousand of the soldiers in it.

Thus the conscientious objector who quiets his conscience with the thought that he is “only saving life and not destroying it,” or who resorts to the imaginary distinction between destructive and constructive work, is simply resting in a mental muddle, and ignoring or misunderstanding the intractable facts of the case. If you sweep a mine out of the sea, thereby enabling a warship to sail safely on its course to destroy a warship or a fort of the enemy, or give safe passage to a transport or a supply ship, your act has all the moral colour and quality of the purpose to which it contributes. If any one of you buys a Liberty Bond (as I hereby most heartily urge you to do), please remember that in doing so you are taking human life. If you think that you are not, and that the soldier who does kill incurs a moral taint that you escape, you are only deluding yourself.

The Quaker who believes that he has an absolute and unconditional command against killing in the New Testament, should read further on in the same volume the words, “We are members one of another,” and meditate

thereon. These true words destroy the fallacy of the atomistic individualist, who dreams that he can be an impartial and untainted spectator of the sins of society; who fancies that he can sometimes join with others in the promotion of an end, and yet not be implicated in moral responsibility for the character of that end. The conscientious objector seems to me to be in the position of a bit of the rope with which a man is hanged. If we can imagine the different strands and threads of a halter becoming conscious, we can fancy that the threads in the part which is tied to the beam might comfort themselves by saying, "Well, thank God we are not guilty of the death of that poor wretch who is hanging down below; only those threads that are around his neck are responsible for killing him." This whole nation is now in the same position as the halter. We are acting as a unit in our endeavor to strangle Germany. The only way in which the conscientious objector to this purpose can keep his conscience unsullied is to get out of the world, or at least to retire to some uninhabited island; since even the nations still neutral are in fact contributing either to our purpose of throttling Germany or to Germany's equally earnest effort to throttle us.

Now the issue as to the morality of our national enterprise turns upon the question whether killing is always murder, and therefore always wrong. The absolute non-resister says it is. But if he is to translate this conviction into conduct, he is bound to suffer his child to be killed or his wife violated before his eyes rather than take the life of the man attempting these things. The last time I had occasion to mention this very plain fact to a conscientious

objector, I was met with the reply that "Life would be impossible if we were always remorselessly logical." Well, granted that the logical vise must not always be wrenched up too hard, I must point out that the test I have suggested is the *only* one which can be applied to the doctrine of non-resistance. Generally speaking, hardly anybody thinks of killing fellow human beings as an ordinary practice; nobody makes a regular daily hobby of it. It is only in the most extreme circumstances, as of actual danger to oneself or to those dearer than oneself, that any question of killing arises. If, therefore, the alleged conscientious objector shies off from the test that his doctrine deliberately provokes, it necessarily follows either that his objection is not really conscientious or else that his conscience is exceedingly short-sighted. Now if any man will say that he would permit the murder of his child, or the worse than killing of his wife or sister, rather than imbrue his hands in blood, we shall be able to respect his logical consistency; *but nothing else*. If he will *not* say this, he convicts himself of what can only be described as intellectual insincerity.

If under certain conditions killing is not murder and not wrong, then under analogous conditions war is not murder. And I say that it is not murder except on the part of an aggressor who either has an unjust end in view, or who deliberately thrusts aside, without trial, peaceful means to a just end. Whoever makes war when he need not is guilty of murder. This means practically that aggressive warfare is always murder; provided, however, that we must find out in any given case whether the apparent aggressor is the real aggressor. If the instigator

of the war so arranges matters as to make it appear that the initiative comes from his victim (as Bernhardi naïvely lays it down that Germany should always do, and as Bismarck momentarily succeeded in doing in 1870), then it is he and not his seeming assailant who is the murderer.

If we are to think intelligently on this subject, we must once for all rid our minds of the idea that an act has always the same moral character, irrespective of its motive and of the conditions under which it is done. A highwayman who attacks you in the street and kills you is a murderer; but if, in resisting the assault, you kill him, you are not a murderer, even though, by seizing his pistol, you shoot him with the very bullet he intended for you. Now Mr. Bertrand Russell, in his volume called *Why Men Fight* (which I take to be, as regards its basic arguments, the most foolish book ever written by a man of Mr. Russell's great and unmistakable ability), is most earnest in insisting that an act done by sixty-five million people is identical in moral character with the same act done by an individual. Assuming the circumstances to be identical, this is most true. I therefore say, and I appeal for justification to Mr. Russell's logic, that all the killing done by Germany in Belgium and France is murder, whereas none of the killing done there by England, France and Belgium, and to be done by America, is or will be murder; nor do I see how any amount of sophistication can evade this fact. I do not assert that every German soldier who kills is a murderer. Each individual case would require separate consideration, and the needed qualifications would be so numerous that it would be impossible in a summary argument to enter upon them. My

point is that, in this war as in every other, the guilt lies with *the intellectual instigator* of the gigantic crime, the person or persons in whose will it originated; and these, in the present case, are the Imperial German Government and its military staff.

V. THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR TO THIS WAR

Generally speaking, and by way of furnishing a rule sufficiently accurate to serve as a starting-point for inquiry, we may say that, in any given war, the more wrong there is on the one side, the more right must there be on the other; the two things vary in inverse ratio. It is not necessary, in assessing the justice of any person's or nation's quarrel, to prove that all the past conduct of the party concerned is irreproachable. If that were so, there could be no such thing as a just quarrel; but neither could there be any human or practical meaning in the word justice. Nations and men, we are all obnoxious to Hamlet's censure: "Use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?" The present question is as to the act of America in accepting the belligerent status forced upon her by Germany, which she could not have refused without abdicating the independence of her sovereignty. America certainly endured at Germany's hands the seventy-times-seven offenses of the Scriptural phrase; but, be the number more or less, it is impossible to forgive any sin until the sinner is repentant. Forgiveness means recognition of the sincerity of an offender's contrition, and faith in its permanence. Humanity cannot forgive Imperial Germany while she remains flagrantly impenitent.

What then of the other "conscientious objector"? — the person who admits that under extreme circumstances killing is justified, and therefore, by necessary implication, that war may be justified; but who claims that our participation in the present war is without sufficient warrant, and upon that ground refuses to take any part in it. There are many things which such a person must make clear, to himself and to his neighbours, by a deep searching of his soul. I will here set down only a few of the questions which he must ask himself.

I. Is he sure that his judgment is absolutely objective and impartial? Would it have been the same no matter what the nation with which we were at war? For instance, if we had received from England or Japan the very same provocations that we received from Germany, including the cancelling of the promise to observe the dictates of international law in making war on merchant ships, would he have said that we ought not to fight? And if he says this, does he admit the logical consequence that we ought not to have fought the Revolutionary War with England, seeing that we then had vastly less provocation from her than we now have from Germany?

This test will get rid of those objectors whose opposition is not really due to the belief that we have gone to war with insufficient reason, but is due to the fact that we are at war with Germany; and there can be no doubt that, consciously or unconsciously, this is the real ground of a vast percentage of the opposition. It was naïvely betrayed in a remark made to me by one such person, who denied the right of the Government "to compel us to kill *our German and Austrian kinsmen.*" Are not all men

kinsmen? And what reason can there be, apart from a morally meaningless sentimentalism, for objecting to kill Germans and Austrians, 99.9 per cent of whom one had never seen or heard of, when under the same provocation one would be willing to kill Englishmen or Frenchmen?

II. Is the objector quite certain, in the depths of his soul, that his opposition does not spring from a somewhat excessive valuation of his own skin? I ask the question not contemptuously and not unsympathetically, for it is perfectly natural, and in no sense disgraceful, to shrink from wounds and death. But it is unworthy to make such a natural repugnance the reason for proffering as a justification arguments that do not really convince one's own mind.

III. Is he certain that there is in his attitude no illicit trace of party hostility to the present Administration? In other words, would his objection have been the same, on the same grounds, had the course taken by Mr. Wilson's Government been pursued instead by a Republican or a Socialist or a Prohibition Administration, or (not to omit the unenfranchised sex) by a Government of women?

IV. Since this objector admits that there may be circumstances justifying war (this being involved in the admission that killing by an individual may be justified), but denies that such circumstances at present exist, will he say what degree of provocation would in his judgment have made it right for us to enter the war?

To this question an answer has been given by the Hon. Robert La Follette, and the same answer can be extracted from the utterances which have fallen (in his comparatively lucid moments) from the Hon. William Hale

Thompson. It is that actual invasion is the test. Mr. La Follette, as one of his admirers points out to me, lays it down that there should be no war without a referendum, except in cases of invasion. But if this is to be the criterion, will the objector explain to us why the destruction of an American ship is not an act of invasion? It is admitted, I take it, that if enemy warships approached our shores and destroyed our houses by gun-fire, this would be invasion, even though not a man of them landed. But is not the destruction of a ship a more heinous act than the destruction of a house, by so much as the chances of the victims' escaping from a ship are so much slighter? And is it an act of different nature in any other sense?

My conclusion, then, may be summed up as follows: The objector who asserts that killing can never under any circumstances be justified may be quite sincerely conscientious, but he is confused in his logic and false to the facts of morality and of human nature. He who admits that killing may sometimes be right, but that America sins by participating in the present war, must first answer the questions I have just submitted. Where proof is impossible, I can only record my conviction that of this second class, assuming them to possess all the information necessary to a fair judgment, there is only a microscopically tiny minority in this country. But in those cases where there is full information, where there has been such a searching of soul as I have suggested, and where, nevertheless, the conviction remains and is sincerely conscientious, those holding it are bound to act upon it, *provided they admit the equal duty of all other men to act upon their no less conscientious convictions*. I am not preaching the doctrine

of "My country right or wrong," for I cannot without moral and intellectual suicide teach, or assent to the teaching, that one is ever bound to do what one believes to be wrong. But to this question I shall hope to return later.

Whoever feels constrained to oppose the nation in its present action must recognize that, together with the privileges, he assumes *the responsibilities of martyrdom*, and that other men, in seeking to counteract his influence or even forcibly to prevent him from thwarting the nation's purpose and aiding that of its enemies, are only asserting the same right and fulfilling the same duty as he. A nation founded on revolution cannot deny that there may be circumstances justifying revolution; and the ultimate criterion of such circumstances can only be the disinterested and fully informed judgment of individual citizens. But every revolution, whether of nation against nation or of individuals against society, becomes when started not only a peaceful conflict of principles, but a tug of wills and a clash of forces. The conscientious objector, therefore, must be prepared to play the game and take his gruel; since to affirm the sacredness of one's own conscience is to affirm the equally binding obligations of the conscience of others.

IX

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE AND CHRISTIAN REUNION

(1920)

THE Christian churches throughout the world have begun again to feel deeply the shame of their divisions. They have always regarded schism as a sin, but since the Reformation that sin has sat lightly on the consciences of Protestants, and has been gravely condemned only by Roman Catholics, who thought themselves guiltless of it. The last few years, however, have produced in the non-Roman denominations a renewed sense that the perpetuation of divisions is not only inconsistent with their faith and its ideals, but makes for impotence in the spiritual work they wish to do for the world.

This renewed sense of sin and weakness has been greatly stimulated by recent experience. In war service, clergy of all denominations worked together more intimately than they had done before, and no doubt were startled to find how much alike they were, and how little difference their varying dogmas made to character, to the will to serve and the power of serving. They also discovered that the spiritual needs of the soldiers were of a kind to which dogmas and sectarian badges were quite irrelevant; that, in fact, the things that were keeping the churches

apart were unrelated to the problems and needs of the time.

Hence the prominence given in recent discussion among many denominations to the question of reunion and the ideal of a single united Christian Church throughout the world. The ideal will undoubtedly call forth wide sympathy among men of good-will, and especially among those who have learned to look upon the spiritual ends of life — upon the deepening of character and righteousness — as supreme above the other ends and the external conditions of life.

But, whatever our sympathy for the ideal, few of us, I think, will find it possible to approve of or anticipate success for the reunion movement upon the conditions which at present are occupying the attention of our Christian neighbours. For these conditions consist of those very things which have caused and perpetuated the existing sunderances of the religious world. The idea that a common profession of belief, a common ministry and common sacraments are indispensable is inveterate in clerical minds. They show as yet no glimmering of the conception of a new basis of unity, upon which, — creed and institutions implying creed being relegated to a secondary plane, — success might be possible.

The great difficulty which confronts Churchmen when they begin to think of reunion is their deep-rooted idea that the Church ought not to change. The recent discussions of the subject show that the workers for reunion are simply grappling, on its practical side, with the difficulty that John Henry Newman, seventy-five years ago, tried to solve on its theological and historical side in

his volume on *The Development of Christian Doctrine*.

Two things were obvious to Newman — that the Church professed not to change, and that it had changed. The motto of Rome was *Semper eadem*. Yet, very clearly, the Church of 1845 was in vital respects different from the Church of 845. The creed of Newman was by no means identical with the creed of St. Augustine; and, even so, Newman differed vastly less from St. Augustine than St. Augustine from St. Peter. How was this paradox to be accounted for?

The difficulty was not peculiar to Roman or other Catholics. Protestantism was as zealous for “the faith once for all committed to the saints,” and for holding fast “the form of sound words,” as Catholicism. Indeed, the gravamen of its criticism of Rome was the changes made by Rome both in creed and practice. And so it comes about that the contradiction which Newman had to resolve, before he could find peace by submission to the Church of Rome, is the same which in another department perplexes the Anglicans and Protestants in their efforts towards reunion to-day.

In the essay on *Development*, Newman said, “In a higher world it is otherwise; but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”¹ The reconciliation that satisfied him, and continues to satisfy many who in various churches are conscious of the difficulty, amounts to saying that the changes are only apparent, not real. There has been no alteration in the supernatural substance of Christianity; there have been changes only in the degree to which the meaning and implications

¹ *Op. cit.*, cap. i, § i, p. 40.

of this originally complete and unchanging revelation are apprehended by the Church. Only those developments which have been sanctioned or commanded by an infallible authority ought to be accepted; and these are sanctioned or commanded only because, in reality, they are *not* changes. They are but unfoldings of what, in germ or in principle, has been accepted "always, everywhere and by all." The faith of Christians is in large measure implicit. The saving faith of ignorant men (*i.e.* of all men so far forth as they are ignorant) is a disposition that in good will submits to the divine authority of the Church, accepts the whole faith as propounded by the Church, and is ready in advance for new authoritative declarations of what the revealed religion implies.

According to this theory, when the first recorded confession of Christian belief was uttered by St. Peter, in the words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," a faith was professed in which were involved, and from which therefore could afterwards rightly be evolved, the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, the Creed of Pope Pius IV, and (in the nineteenth century) the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin and of the infallibility of the Pope; together, no doubt, with still other *credenda* not yet declared obligatory.

Such was the intellectual gymnastic by which so great and good a man, so sincere yet subtle a thinker as John Henry Newman was able to adjust himself to the contradiction. The Church, ever the same yet ever changing, was and is an instance of evolution. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

The reunion movement to-day, not having the advan-

tage (which Newman found in the Roman system) of a duly accredited infallible organ to determine what changes constitute legitimate developments and how far they may go, is floundering over the same difficulty. Whether the unchanging thing is to consist of creeds and sacraments, or of doctrines and a church-order extracted by private judgment from the Bible, the churches feel that they cannot compromise upon any detail of it without betrayal of their trust and disloyalty to their cause. And on this rock it seems as though, for the present, the reunion movement will split. Auguste Sabatier, the eminent French Protestant theologian, declares in his *Philosophy of Religion* that all the barriers between the denominations are in ruins, and nobody wants to rebuild them. It may be so, although some clerical utterances make one feel that Dean Sabatier is unduly optimistic. But even if it be so, the denominations seem timidly desirous of staying within the ruined barriers. Few show anything like courage in overleaping them. One cannot but feel that if the thing were left to the clergy, there would never be reunion or inter-communion. The pressure is coming largely from the laity, and well-wishers of the movement will hope that it may be steadily maintained. The clergy seem much like what Jeremy Bentham found the legal profession in Great Britain a century and a quarter ago: very reluctant to reform themselves or change their habits; wedded to the past, to authority, precedent and tradition; unable to recognize a fundamental change in the mind of the world; and, when personally modest, incapable of contemplating the hypothesis that the authors of their traditions may have been guilty of any serious error.

These impressions are borne out by a study of the most notable recent illustration of the force of the reunion movement and of the obstacles it is encountering. I refer to the Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion held at Lambeth Palace, in London, from July 5th to August 7th of the present year. The gathering was a large and notable one, and its committees studied many subjects upon which the Conference passed resolutions conspicuous for a greater measure of liberality and humane insight than we have been accustomed to receive from Episcopal conclaves. In personnel also, and in its demonstration of the extent to which the Anglican Communion is spreading over the world, the Conference had great significance. It comprised two hundred and fifty-two bishops, representing the British Isles, the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, the West Indies, New Zealand, India, China, and some thirty dioceses scattered over the outlying parts of the earth. The problem to which the assembly gave its most earnest attention was that of church reunion.

The bishops did their utmost to adopt a liberal and friendly attitude towards Christians of other communions. They have made considerable advances towards reunion with the Holy Orthodox Eastern Church and with the Church of Sweden. With regard to the Church of Rome, they recognize that no approaches towards reunion can be made so long as Rome persists in its brusque demand for unconditional surrender, but they look with interest to certain movements taking place within the Roman Church which contain the possibility of a change of attitude.¹

It would be both interesting and important if the

¹ Lambeth Conf. Report, p. 144. (London: S. P. C. K.)

Anglican Communion should succeed in effecting corporate reunion with the Eastern Church. The Roman Church, in that event, would be ringed around by a gigantic and growing body that might effectively compete with it for the dominance of the Christian world. If they could succeed also in reaching terms of reunion with Protestants of the non-episcopal denominations, they would nullify the chief argument and remove the chief reproach which Rome has been bringing against them ever since the Reformation. Nor would such a development be without its importance from other points of view. In our own country, for example, if the twenty-eight millions or so of non-Roman churchmen were corporately reunited in a single Church, the Roman body, with its thirteen or fourteen millions of members, would become relatively insignificant, and would cease to constitute the political, intellectual and moral danger that many Americans think it at present.

But what are the terms of reunion that the Anglican Bishops suggest? On reading these we suddenly feel as though the offered sugar-plum had turned to sand when we got our teeth into it. The conditions are the following:

“We believe that the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the whole-hearted acceptance of:—

“The Holy Scriptures, as the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith; and the Creed commonly called Nicene, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith, and either it or the Apostles’ Creed as the Baptismal confession of belief:

“The divinely instituted sacraments of Baptism and the

Holy Communion, as expressing for all the corporate life of the whole fellowship in and with Christ:

“A ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body.

“May we not reasonably claim that the Episcopate is the one means of providing such a ministry?”

We cannot occupy ourselves here with this interestingly vague attitude towards the Bible. All we can do is to set up an interrogation point or two. In what senses are the words “record” and “revelation” used? Of the various ideas of God in the Bible, which is the authentically revealed one? If the whole Bible is not the “rule and standard” of faith, which parts are? and upon what principle is the selection made? Are the words, “whole-hearted acceptance of the Holy Scriptures, as the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man” anything but an attempt to conceal a thousand differences of belief under the mask of a common formula?

More challenging is the extraordinary proposal to make “the Creed commonly called Nicene” the basis of fellowship in a reunited Church. For the instruction of readers who (unlike the present writer) were not made to learn this Creed by heart when they were six years old, and who may not since have attached to it the same degree of importance as the Bishops do, I insert it here, as it appears in the Episcopal Prayer Book:

“I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible:

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made: Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: Whose kingdom shall have no end.

“And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord and giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one Catholick and Apostolick Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come.”

This venerable document dates substantially from the fourth century. It was based on older formulas, which were revised at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., later by St. Cyril in 362, again at the Council of Constantinople in 381, and finally at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The Council of Nicaea was the first oecumenical gathering to make such a detailed profession of belief the basis of Church fellowship. This it did because the Church, previously held together by persecution, had begun to split into sects and parties the moment persecution gave place to

State recognition and encouragement. The Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity because of its unity and vigour. If it had split up, it would have ceased to be an asset to him. Hence, it was virtually at his dictation that the Council was held and the creed adopted.

It did not secure peace; but, after more than a century, it became accepted throughout the Christian Church, with the exception of one clause, which is held by the Western and not by the Eastern Church. This is the celebrated *filioque* clause: "I believe in the Holy Ghost . . . Who proceedeth from the Father *and the Son*." One of the great difficulties in the way of reunion between Anglican and Eastern Christendom is going to be the highly important question whether the Third Person of the Trinity "proceeds" from both the others or from the First only; and this despite the fact that no human being knows what is meant by "proceeding."

Evidently one important effect of making this creed the basis of a reunited Church would be to exclude all Unitarians. It has ever been the fashion of Roman and Anglican Catholics to deny that Unitarians are Christians; and the Lambeth Conference of 1920, by its insistence on the Nicene Creed, endorses this verdict. Yet even a cursory survey of the religious literature of the last century would show that such Unitarians as Channing and Martineau actually held far more of the traditional creed than is now held by many who are called Episcopalians and who hold distinguished positions in the Anglican Church. How these latitudinarians reconcile their consciences to the regular use of the Nicene Creed and the occasional use of the Athanasian is their own affair. But to the

onlooker, there must needs seem to be a touch of irony in the spectacle of the Church of Bishop Henson and Dr. Hastings Rashdall demanding of all and sundry, as a condition of reunion, the "whole-hearted acceptance" of the Nicene formula.

Setting aside the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found in the New Testament, save by those who read it into the text; that this doctrine (by Newman's own confession) is only through a generous use of inference and charitable construction to be extracted from the ante-Nicene Fathers; ignoring also the circumstance that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Christ, by the consensus of competent critics, was not in the Gospels in their original form; one asks oneself why such a jumble of ancient metaphysics as the Nicene Creed should be imposed in the twentieth century as a condition of religious fellowship. Almost every clause of it represents the compromising of an ancient theological battle. Not a word of it has anything to do with ethics. Even if its presumptuous definitions of the Undefinable should happen to be true, why should anybody's admission to a religious society be deferred until his education reaches the remarkably advanced stage at which he could intelligently discern their truth? It is hard to understand how anybody can seriously say that he believes the Nicene Creed, except a person who would undertake to believe anything he is told. As Seeley puts it in *Ecce Homo*, a man's assertion that he believes such doctrines "means that as the words make no impression whatever upon his mind, so they excite no opposition in it." If the propositions of the creed were advanced in *Mittelhochdeutsch* or Mandarin Chinese to

an illiterate street-arab, his assertion that he believed them would be intellectually as valuable as that of the average layman of the Roman and Anglican Churches.

Besides excluding Unitarians, and all members of Trinitarian denominations who have no fancy for taking a new yoke upon their souls, the proposal of the bishops discloses a piously ingenious, if not ingenuous, alertness when we remember that the particular creed of which they demand whole-hearted acceptance is the only one of the three oecumenical creeds which imposes the doctrine of baptismal regeneration: "I acknowledge one baptism *for the remission of sins.*" The Athanasian Creed itself contains no such statement.

One would have thought that even to bishops it must be obvious that the reunion of the churches on any such basis as this never can, nor will, nor ought to succeed. For, even though most Christians might be willing to accept the vague formula about the Bible, very few, except those already in Episcopal Churches, would dream of accepting the Nicene Creed, and almost none would be willing to admit the implied claim for the magical or supernatural efficacy of episcopal ordination, and the crushing condemnation that claim insinuates against the validity of the present ministry of pastors not episcopally ordained. Baptism was declared by John Henry Newman to be "absolutely necessary for salvation." He took this position with a full acceptance of the horrible inferences from it drawn out in antiquity by St. Augustine and St. Fulgentius.¹ And now the Anglican Bishops in effect

¹ *Development*, cap. iv, § 1, p. 129. And cp. Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi, Sermon vi: "We are under the

ask for the endorsement of this appalling dogma! According to the historic belief, the unbaptized (whose sins *ipso facto* are not remitted) are condemned, whether they die immediately after birth or at the end of a long life, to eternal torment in hell-fire. Not less intolerable than this is the notion that the fortunate receivers of the sacrament owe the remission of their sins to the application of water and the necessary verbal formulae. What is this but a magical idea of the most grossly unethical nature? What sort of God would save or damn on such terms?

Equally preposterous is the claim that the grace necessary for valid ministerial functioning is communicated by the imposition of episcopal hands. Such ideas may have been acceptable in the fourth century. To-day the plain statement of them carries their refutation with it. The bishops must know that these ideas are in fact not taken seriously by at least half their own clergy, and by a much larger proportion of the educated laity in their Church. If they wait for other denominations to adopt them, they

bondage of an inborn element of evil, which thwarts and stifles whatever principles remain of truth and goodness in us, directly we attempt to act according to them . . . Now for ourselves, my brethren, we know (praised be God) that all of us have from our infancy been taken out of this miserable heathen state by holy baptism, which is God's appointed means of regeneration. Still it is not less our natural state; it is the state in which every one of us was born; it is the state in which every little child is, when brought to the font . . . There is, till he is baptized, an evil spirit in his heart, a spirit of evil lying hid, seen of God, unseen by man, . . . an evil spirit which from the first is hateful to God, and at length will be his eternal ruin. That evil spirit is cast out by holy baptism, without the privilege of which his birth would but be a misery to him." This is the Catholicism which is now-days advertised as a moral improvement on Calvinism.

will wait until doomsday. It was a brave word of Dr. Inge of St. Paul's when, commenting on these proposals, he plainly declared that the doctrine of Apostolic Succession (on which rests the idea of the transmission of grace by episcopal ordination) is a pure myth. It has no historic foundation. For all Protestants, except the more conservative Episcopalians who dislike being called Protestants, these proposals involve a step back to the ideas which their founders abandoned in the sixteenth century. However incomplete the Reformation and whatever its faults, it was at least, in important respects, an advance from magical and mechanical to ethical and spiritual conceptions of the religious life.

But if the idea of reunion on the basis of the Nicene Creed and Episcopal sacramentalism cannot succeed, what denomination could offer a more hopeful credal basis? The answer is, None. So long as theological creed in any shape, however attenuated, is made the basis, the scheme is chimerical. It would not work in the fourth century. Even the backing of it for a thousand years with governmental coercion and the arts of the Inquisition could not prevent its failure. How much more hopeless is the idea to-day! The intellectual revolution of the last three centuries has been carrying the world beyond the credal stage of religious evolution. Men complain, not without cause, of the secularism and materialism of this age; but at least in intellectual seriousness, in the sincerity which will not lightly make great unverifiable assertions, and in the sense of man's native moral power and responsibility, it is spiritually in advance of the ages, so-called, of faith. It is impossible now to be-

lieve in a despotic and tyrannical God, who punishes well-meaning people for innocently falling into intellectual errors over problems beyond the capacity of the human mind, or dooms them for the mere misfortune of dying unbaptized.

The doctrines of the creeds, when they are not statements of alleged fact from the New Testament, are at best problems for philosophy. They are in nowise aids to the spiritual life. And, as Milton would say, even though the Nicene Creed were true, yet if a man believes it "only because his pastor says so or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, . . . the very truth he holds becomes his heresy." We ought to count it a law of intellectual ethics that men should not profess to believe upon authority any statements which those who make them could not know to be true without ceasing to be human beings.

What is the purpose of religious fellowship? Is it to solve riddles or to purify and ennoble life? The question answers itself. One values the churches for what, with all their shortcomings, they have done towards this higher object. But this service was achieved in spite of their creeds, not by virtue of them. Always hindrances to spiritual insight and growth, the creeds have now become more than ever such.

Religion to-day cannot be expressed in dogmatic terms. It must be defined in terms that indicate its practical purpose and the inner inspirations and activities by which man pursues that purpose. Metaphysics is not religion. Important as a sound philosophy is, religion cannot await its elaboration; and no philosophy that feels justified in

imposing itself by the coercion of authority can be sound.

It is much that the churches are ashamed of their divisions. That their first move towards reunion should take the form of an effort to agree upon creeds was almost inevitable. Those who believe that this kind of effort will fail and ought to fail, are yet not discouraged. They will look for its failure to enlighten the churches as to its error and set them on a wiser course.

One of the functions of the Ethical Movement is to suggest for the consideration of our religious neighbours what, in our judgment, that wiser course should be. We agree with the churches in attributing sacredness to human life as the sphere of the development of the human spirit. We hold with them that righteousness, inward and outward, is infinitely momentous. We suggest that they should take these facts as their basis of fellowship and co-operation, and relegate philosophic explanations of them to a secondary rank. The creeds are attempts at such explanations. Most of us are quite unable to hold them, and could not profess them without gross insincerity. Yet we do not exclude from our fellowships those who have not abandoned them. The Ethical Society is hospitable to persons who still believe themselves to hold the traditional creeds (excepting only the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian), provided that they do not consider the profession of these creeds necessary to spiritual fellowship, or desire to impose them upon others.

But it is not only Christians to whom our Societies appeal, or to whom the churches ought to look, if they desire a truly catholic spiritual fellowship. What of the multitude of our Jewish fellow-citizens? What of the

countless hosts of Buddhists, Mohammedans and others, who also are growing spiritually under the influences of this new time? We need as our religious ideal the conception of a world-union of all men of good-will, just as we need for the fellowship of nations the ideal of a voluntary union embracing all. Reunion on the basis proposed by the Anglican Bishops would but deepen and widen and perpetuate the gulf between Christians and non-Christians.

Forty-four years of life under various conditions have shown that in our Societies we have a working basis of fellowship in the true purposes of religion, which are the exploration of the human soul and its powers, and the attempt to translate our ideal visions into actuality. Through such exploration and such translation, we hope for a gradual discovery of the high truth about ourselves and our relations to that spiritual universe which our own existence implies. We believe, not wholly without warrant, that through the active intellectual and practical work of such fellowships, we shall in time delve deeper into truth than the dogmatic method has led men. Our way has at least the superlative advantage that it renders possible the spiritual fraternity of all who love the right and wish to labour for its growing actualization in life. The condemnation of the bishops' method and of all attempts at reunion on the basis of creed, is that by their utmost success they could but build up a new and larger sect, that would for ever exclude the majority of mankind.

X

THE TYRANNY OF BOOKS

(1921)

I

WHAT constitutes education? Who is the educated man? These questions have called forth widely different answers in different times. In the days of Plato a very limited list of subjects were deemed worthy of the attention of a gentleman, and it was easily possible for a person of fair mind and average industry to attain a competent mastery of all the departments of knowledge recognized as forming parts of education.

The Middle Ages also had a comparatively modest standard in this matter. Books were few (although not so few as we moderns often suppose), and the kinds of knowledge now pursued by laboratory and experimental methods had hardly begun to exist. There were seven liberal arts to be studied, and he who had mastered them had acquired all that was then understood by education. Such mastery, to be sure, was not easy to attain. Dante, one of the most learned men of his time, undoubtedly had to consecrate to the attainment of his knowledge more effort than it would cost a modern student to reach equal results. (I speak solely of knowledge, not of the incalculable endowment of divine genius which Dante possessed.)

But although it was not easy to compass the whole gamut of the liberal arts which constituted mediaeval education, it was not impossible. The professor of those days undertook to teach any subject in the university curriculum. He was a master of the arts — all of them. Philosophy was the sum of all scientific knowledge, and after graduation each master was expected to lecture on philosophy for two years. He felt ready and able to expound whatever science might be assigned to him, by choice, by turn, or by lot.¹ Of this or that professor it may have been true, as the old German jingle declared, that

*Viele Dinge wusst' er freilich,
Aber alle wusst' er schlecht —*

“He knew many things indeed, but knew them all badly”; yet the very use of these words as a censure implied the possibility of knowing the many things well. A man is never satirized for not doing what is recognized as impossible. It was only amid a public opinion formed from living proofs of the possibility of knowing reasonably well all that constituted knowledge that a man's shortcomings in certain departments could have exposed him to such banter.

Certain irreverent undergraduates of nineteenth-century Oxford once perpetrated the following lines at the expense of an unmistakably great and good man:

*I am Benjamin Jowett,
Master of Balliol College;
Whatever is known, I know it;
What I don't know isn't knowledge.*

¹ See Paulsen's *Introduction to Philosophy*, English translation by Thilly, p. 31.

The satire in this jingle is due to the fact that by the nineteenth century it had become universally recognized as impossible for any man to sustain the claim put in Jowett's mouth.

And yet, little more than three hundred years ago, it was possible for Francis Bacon to declare in all seriousness, without exposing himself to ridicule, that he had taken all knowledge to be his province. Not, indeed, that he claimed to know all that could then be known in each department. There seems still to be some confusion as to the precise nature of the contribution he undertook to make (and did make) to science. He no more invented induction than he destroyed the syllogism. The scientific method had been practised long before him, and by him was imperfectly understood and applied. Elsewhere I have ventured to call him "the statesman of science,"¹ and I still think this an accurate labelling of him and his work. He undertook to show the barrenness of the methods of study pursued in his time, and to suggest other methods that should be fruitful. He further had, more clearly than any of his contemporaries, the vision of the great conquests waiting to be achieved by mankind when the methods of observation, experimentation and induction were systematically and purposefully applied. His taking of all knowledge for his province may mean no more than that he undertook to frame a system of the sciences and to prescribe the methods to be pursued in developing them. In fact, however, he claimed, and achieved, more than this.

Now, in the nineteenth century, the construction of

¹ *Our Fellow Shakespeare* (McClurg, Chicago, 1916), p. 37.

classified systems of the sciences became a favorite pursuit. The thing was attempted by Auguste Comte. Herbert Spencer, too, shared the mediaeval notion that philosophy is but the sum-total of the sciences.

With a courage greater than his discretion, he advertised an entire system of Synthetic (*i.e.*, scientific) Philosophy, to be written by himself. I am far from sharing the scorn which it is now fashionable to pretend for Spencer, who planned his life in the great man's way, setting out before himself a series of immense tasks, and laboring at them with heroic persistence through many years of feeble health, financial stringency and other difficulties. It would be well if those who censure him, with such easy superiority, could devote to their own labours a tithe of the energy, to say nothing of the ability, he displayed.

And yet it is certain that Spencer did not write a system of philosophy. It is more than doubtful whether his volumes on the partial sciences contain any "philosophy," properly so called, at all. Even the First Part of *First Principles* amounts to little more than the statement that, for the purposes of the individual sciences, certain vast domains of human interest must be excluded from inquiry, and treated (despite their admitted reality) as though they were non-existent. "The Unknowable" is a synonym for "that which is scientifically irrelevant."

The enduring interest of Spencer's undertaking will consist in the fact that he still thought it conceivable, in the mid-nineteenth century, for one man to master so immense a fraction of the field of knowledge as he essayed to cover. Never again, we may be sure, will anybody

have the temerity to set himself such a task. Already in Spencer's day the utmost educational attainment an individual could aspire to was expressed in the phrase, "knowing everything of something and something of everything."

What a fall from the ideal of the mediaeval university, with its polymath professors who knew everything of everything! Or rather, what a testimony to the increase of the sum of knowledge does the change of standard constitute!

II

Yet already, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, we are forced to abandon this relatively modest nineteenth century standard. No man now can know everything of something, if the word "something" is to denote any one of the great provinces of knowledge. For each of these provinces has in turn been departmentalized, and every department requires the exclusively concentrated attention of its own specialist. And this same development of knowledge, both by extension and intension, which makes it impossible to know everything of something, has made it also impossible for any man to know something of everything.

Mr. Edison (according to the newspapers) recently jotted down at random a batch of questions, the answers to which happened to have been brought within his knowledge by the exigencies of his own work and reading. He is said to have regarded the inability of university men to answer these as evidence of the failure of our university system. Not having seen any statement from Mr. Edison in which this charge was plainly made, I find it hard to

believe that a man of his great practical attainments can have been foolish enough to make it. For it is evident that any man who has lived a life of study, whether in the physical or the human sciences, could easily rattle off such a list, which nobody but himself could answer without reference to authorities. The offering of such question-lists as a test of education proves only that the list-maker has a thoroughly false and unpractical conception of what education is.

A year ago, Mr. Arthur Woods, the highly efficient and successful Commissioner of Police whom New York City honored itself by employing under its last decent administration, published in a weekly review an explanation of the methods by which he had reformed his department and made it function successfully. He said that when he was offered the appointment, it occurred to him to jot down on a scrap of paper a list of the things which a policeman ought to know, and then to open a school to teach those things to the members and prospective members of his force.

This startling innovation suggested to a Middle Western newspaper the idea of extending the principle. It proposed to its readers that they should try upon themselves the method applied by Mr. Woods to his policemen. Instead of making the usual New Year resolutions, the collapse of which gives so many people a short-lived pain in the conscience about the third of January, they should write out a list of the things which they ought to know in order to discharge adequately the functions of their present employment.

I am not quite clear whether the danger of doing this

is greater or less than the danger of leaving it undone. For, as regards all persons whose work is not merely mechanical, the certain result of a conscientious inquisition of this sort is to bring one sharply up against one of the tragic aspects of life — that which Professor Felix Adler has called the frustration of man on the side of his intellect.¹ We find that there is in us an infinite desire to know, and that there is, outside of each individual, an infinite realm of possible knowledge. But we also find that the finite conditions which fetter us in time and space make it impossible for us to attain completeness of knowledge, even in those departments in which mastery is requisite for the due discharge of our special responsibilities.

Of course there are many spheres of humble, necessary, honorable routine work, the doers of which may fairly claim to know all that is required of them. Such degrees of competence may seem satisfactory to persons devoid of ambition to rise, either in or beyond their departments. Yet, even in such fields, if we take account not only of the established methods of work, but also of the possibilities of improvement, by inventions to make the work unnecessary or to discharge it more efficiently and economically, we shall usually find that no one man's possible knowledge will be adequate.

To speak only of routine functions of which one has had some experience, I may say that in the course of sixteen years, divided between the trades of printer, journalist, stenographer and secretary to a man of letters, I never found it possible to master all the fields of knowledge

¹ Felix Adler, *An Ethical Philosophy of Life*, p. 65 ff. (New York: Appleton, 1918.)

directly ancillary to the work I was doing, and strictly necessary to its effective performance. Even the mechanical processes of printing were constantly being changed by new inventions, introduction of fresh machines and improvements in existing ones. In journalism, the contradiction between what one assumes to do and what one can do is even more flagrant. As to secretarial work, it seemed to me that there were two things necessary to salvation: one, that the secretary should know all that was known by the person for whom he was working; the other, that he should know all that that person did not know, in order to safeguard him.

I suppose that the large number of persons possessing these qualifications accounts for the fact that the salaries paid for secretarial work are still somewhat less than princely. It is a case of supply and demand.

This, then, is the tragedy (or the joke) of our striving after knowledge: that any person engaged in a profession, or in teaching, or in any responsible executive office connected with either public or private business, will be forced, by a few minutes' sincere contemplation of what he ought to know, to realize that he never can, in the longest of lifetimes, attain such knowledge.

For example, consider the exigencies which, in these times, every minister of religion is called upon to meet. If he is to be ready to deal with these, his knowledge ought to include at least the following items:

Six languages, besides English.

The history of all nations, in main outline.

Anthropology, especially in relation to religion and psychology.

The doctrines and histories of all the great religions.

A thorough knowledge of the history, doctrines, developments, and attendant sects and heresies of Judaism and Christianity.

All the ethical systems of the world, and the history of ethical practice.

That fine art of applying general moral laws and principles to particular cases, which has unfortunately fallen into discredit because it is called casuistry.

The theoretical principles of all the chief systems of law, and the main lines of actual legislation.

The principles of economics, in their bearing on social justice.

Psychology, especially religious.

The main schools of philosophy and their history.

The general principles and the experimental methods of physical science.

A multitude of biographies, as providing materials for the study of character.

The principles of pedagogy, and the history of educational systems.

The classics of all the Western literatures, from Greece onwards, especially poetry and drama.

The general history and chief schools of art.

Certain items in the foregoing list may be objected to as irrelevant. Why, for instance, need a preacher or religious teacher know the principles of the chief legal systems? I would answer: Because law represents the most elaborate and general embodiment of the conscience of nations, and because the most difficult practical problem

in the world is that of deciding between legal compulsion and educational suasion as methods of reform. It is strange that the great religions have in general resorted to persecution and force for the inculcation of beliefs and standards admittedly worthless save when they are freely adopted from personal conviction. The study of history and psychology must be supplemented by the study of law to bring home to one's mind the sense of the importance of this problem, and of the dreadful failures hitherto encountered through ignoring it.

It may also be objected that a religious leader need not bother his head with the principles of economics. But again I answer, What can be the value of the pronouncements of churchmen, individually or collectively, on problems of social justice, if they bring to those problems only a bare ethical sense of the wrongness of what is, and no scientific insight into the possible ways of devising something practically better? Have not most of the social programs of churches been vitiated by this lack of acquaintance with realities and possibilities?

III

My purpose here, however, is not to vindicate the necessity of the studies I have enumerated for this particular case. I offer my outline neither as complete nor yet as containing no superfluous items, but solely for the purpose of making manifest the *impossibility* of any man's achieving a thorough, or even an adequate working mastery of the things enumerated. If I am a religious or moral teacher, these are the things I ought to know. To the

extent to which I am imperfectly equipped in them, I am incompetent. But I cannot master them all. If I could give my whole life to the studies preparatory to the practice of my profession, I should not, at the end, be ready to begin the practice. I must, then, rub along as best I can, conscious of great deficiencies, working as opportunity serves to fill up this or that gap, yet with the certain knowledge that my shortcomings must to the end remain incurable.

The point of my present argument, be it noted, is that the particular case I have chosen for illustration *is not exceptional*. A similar result will be reached if any banker, lawyer, physician, architect, statesman, journalist, school-master, or naval or military officer will subject himself to a similar examination. If the minister of religion were the only person haunted by this contradiction between what is necessary and what is possible, it would be evident that his work had not been properly delimited. The problem would become a simple one of organization and departmentalization. We should say, "In every other line of work, we have recognized the division of labour and given effect to the principle of one man one job; but we are expecting this parson to be a syndicate, a university faculty in himself, a one-man orchestra. We must overhaul his work, limit him to what can be expected of one man, and evolve specialists to take care of the rest."

But it is not so. The contradiction I am pointing out runs all through life, and through every department of work. There is an ancient complaint about the "little wisdom" with which the world is governed. *Quantula sapientia mundus regitur!* The complaint itself shows

little wisdom. We are, every one of us, inevitably and incurably inadequate to our tasks: a little knowledge is dangerous, but a little is all one can get.

Realizing this, we perceive the kind of tyranny exercised by the knowledge we ought to acquire, the books we ought to master. But lest the mass of the people should lay to their souls the flattering unction that this pressure of human limitations does not affect them, they must be reminded of the way in which they are implicated in the contradiction.

What about the requirements of democracy, the tasks and responsibilities inevitably thrust upon every citizen by the attempt to give effect to the doctrine that sovereignty is derived from the whole people, and that all must participate in its exercise? One sometimes wonders whether, if democracy ever fails, it will not be because it needs must ask of the citizen more than he possibly can give. Should this prove to be the case, we shall be driven to devise some system of government by the expert.

Read through any day's newspaper and note the multitude of problems it presents, none of which can be properly dealt with save on the basis of full information, experience, and practised skill in statecraft. Consider, for example, the everlasting labour problem, with its strong and seemingly irreconcilable elements of justice and injustice in the claims of both sides; with nobody able to state precisely what justice demands, or to show us how to secure it, if it could be stated.

Remember, too, that we, as voters, are each and all responsible for both the national and international policy of our country. The first, the elementary condition of

discharging that responsibility is to be adequately informed. Yet which of us knows fully and exactly the facts concerning our policy with relation to the Philippines, to Haiti, Cuba, Mexico, the states of South America, Japan, China, Europe, to say nothing of home affairs?

This particular dilemma came home to me a number of years ago when I was trying to equip myself for the practice of journalism. I then realized that to keep moderately informed one ought to study regularly the Spanish, Italian, French, Swiss, German, and British newspaper press, and the leading reviews of Europe and America.

And, obviously, it is not only the journalist but every voter who needs the knowledge thus difficult or impossible to acquire. The dilemma cannot be escaped. One may make good resolutions to read more, and more critically and judiciously; but no amount of fidelity in carrying out such resolutions can really meet the needs of the case.

The progress of the world during the last century has filled our attention to the saturation-point, and overflowed it. A normal human being has only a limited power of attention. The intellect of man is indeed a marvellous potency, of immense range and flexibility, but it is not capable of indefinite expansion. The greater the range of subjects it essays to cover, the shallower must be its penetration into each, the looser its hold upon each. And for modern city dwellers, it is impossible to escape the perpetual storming of the attention with a thousand discontinuous, unrelated subjects. The eye is dazzled with seeing, the ear deafened with hearing. The telephone, the telegraph, the wireless bombard us unceasingly with the happenings of all the earth; and the inevitable result is

that we cannot detach any single matter from the stream long enough to see it in itself and in its relations. The abolition of privacy, the destruction of the possibility of that quiet mental concentration upon any single subject necessary for thorough understanding — this is what we call the march of intellect, the progress of science.

We are confronted with a choice of evils. We must decide between specialization with thoroughness and general acquaintance with superficiality. The specialist, as such, is inevitably narrow; the man whose range is wide must needs lack thoroughness. In no human mind is knowledge unified. Nowhere does there exist, and by nobody can there be drawn, a map of the entire continent of knowledge, where all the parts can be seen in their true scale, proportions and relations. Specialization has been carried so far that an assembly of specialists in different sciences cannot understand each other's technical language. Some years ago in China, there was held a conference of native Christians. They came from all parts of that vast land, and discovered when they got together that by reason of the difference of their dialects it was impracticable to conduct their proceedings in their native tongue. The only language they all understood and could make each other understand was English, in which, accordingly, they held their deliberations. This is an allegory of the state of affairs subsisting among departmental specialists in science. They are all scientific; they all apply fundamentally the same methods; but there is no scientific dialect by which the distinctive thoughts and positive results of each can be conveyed to all the others.

Such is the penalty we needs must pay for the extension

of knowledge and the multiplication of the means of investigation and communication. "Let knowledge grow from more to more," said Tennyson. It has done so, with the result of verifying the old saying, "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Or, if not sorrow, we have at least increased inconvenience, and brought ourselves to the unescapable realization of the inadequacy of the finite human mind to grasp the boundless universe deployed before it. By our mental constitution we create time and space; by making the pulsations of the atmosphere and the ether conductors instead of barriers to our intercourse we have gone far to annihilate time and space. Half-a-dozen times a day we get the news of the world, and we are never able to digest the meaning of one hour's intelligence before our attention is bombarded with the next.

It would be silly to complain of this. I am stating a fact, not repining at it. In so far as our limitations are inevitable, we must be resigned to them. And one of the first things forced upon us is a re-definition of our standard of what constitutes an educated man. The nineteenth century's ideal was humble compared to that of the Middle Ages. The twentieth century's standard must be as modest relatively to that of the nineteenth as was that in comparison with the mediaeval.

IV

For answer, then, to our question, I would tentatively venture this definition: *The educated man is he who knows what he does not know, and who knows how to learn.*

Knowing what one does not know, — distinguishing clearly and precisely between knowledge and mere opinion, or surmise, or hearsay, or tradition, or rumour, — is not the small thing it may seem at the first blush. It is the one real advance that the modern period has made over its predecessors. And for this advance we are chiefly indebted to the progress of science and the elaboration of its method. This it is which has rendered more stringent our conception of accuracy. It has made us realize that genuine knowledge, though not impossible, is difficult to come by. It has forced us to strictness of verification, to a wary scepticism about the premises and assumptions from which we reason, to a rigid discrimination between demonstration, probability, possibility, improbability and impossibility.

What is there, after all, apart from this, to distinguish the reasoning of modern men from that of even very great men in the past? Take the greatest, — St. Augustine, for instance, or Dante of the *De Monarchia*. These men and their contemporaries seldom paused to ask, or dreamed that it could be necessary to ask, whether the data upon which their reasoning proceeded were verified. What they found in books was final for them. Dante's attitude towards "*the* Philosopher" (Aristotle) is indistinguishable from his attitude to the Bible. St. Augustine, controverting in the *De Civitate Dei* the idea that the sack of Rome was due to Christian infidelity to Rome's old gods, reasons as wildly on the principle of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* as any pagan of them all. The Middle Age would inquire how many angels could dance on a needle's point without worrying about the previous

questions, — whether the angels existed; whether, if so, they occupied space or functioned through extended bodies. Horoscopes were freely cast by persons who never thought of asking what evidence certified the assumed connection between the posture of the heavens at a given moment and the character of the person born at that moment. Men “knew” in those days that witchcraft could play havoc with human life and with property. Did not Sir Thomas Browne concede it? Did not Sir Matthew Hale judicially sentence people for practising it? Was not the pinchbeck pope of Massachusetts, Cotton Mather, infallibly convinced of it? Had they not seen witches condemned upon unimpeachable testimony? To question the reality of witchcraft was to flout the plain words of the Bible. So said Wesley; and that was heresy, — unthinkable heresy, — whether from the standpoint of Catholic or Protestant. Men “knew” that devils caused diseases and insanity; and they knew it because they took for granted the existence of the devils. They saw the effect — disease; they inferred the cause — diabolical agency. They did not notice that they had not the same kind of evidence for the cause as for the effect.

Now, the scientific method has had the invaluable result of discrediting this kind of wild reasoning. Not but that men of scientific training often reason wildly; but they have their standard to come back to; and the sober second thought of the laboratory will usually correct the wild first thought of the rumor-market or the gossip-shop. We know now that we cannot believe in the existence or the spatiality of angels or devils without evidence, and that what somebody else said is not evidence; not even if

it were said two thousand years ago and recorded in a sacred book. These records are evidence, indeed, of the beliefs of their writers, but not of the objective, factual nature of the things in which those writers believed. It is by applying this discrimination that we have got rid of witchcraft, astrology and other age-old delusions, and we are rapidly getting rid of the more appalling and conscience-affronting beliefs associated with many religious and theological systems.

This, then, is what I mean by "knowing what one does not know." There is nothing new in the idea; the only novel thing is its comparatively wide dissemination. It is what Kant called criticism and Huxley called agnosticism (for, be it remembered, Huxley's agnosticism was a very different thing from Spencer's). It is the method by which Socrates sought to awaken his contemporaries out of the slumber of their false conceit of wisdom. It is the most precious contribution to sanity and intellectual morality that has yet been made among men.

As to the second term of our standard, by "knowing how to learn" I understand not merely the trick of knowing where to look for information, important as that is. I mean having a mind so disciplined that information can be readily and effectively assimilated for practical mastery. That man is educated who, surveying a large and complex subject, can detect at a glance the elements that are essential, distinguish them from those that are secondary, perceive the difference between causal relations and relations of mere contiguity, and thus reduce the whole to an ordered system and keep the clue in his possession.

I am here using the word "education" in a sense

slightly different from that given to it by Mrs. Katherine Fullerton Gerould.¹ Mrs. Gerould strangely defines education as something done to a person by others. Having thus created for herself a gratuitous difficulty in dealing with the case of self-educated men, she still more strangely maintains that, in so far as such persons are educated, the education has been inflicted upon them by the books they have studied. While there is probably little substantial difference between my view and that of Mrs. Gerould, I think that, as a matter of convenience and accuracy, we ought to stick to that meaning of the word "education" which both etymology and common usage justify. This is almost the exact opposite of Mrs. Gerould's definition. It is much less of a paradox to say that there is no education *but* self-education, that nothing which others can do to a man constitutes education, than to say that education is what others do to us. A good school or university is a place where the opportunity of self-education is provided. The student, *if he will*, may become educated, primarily by his own activities, and secondarily by taking advantage of the facilities (books, instruments, lecturers, tutors) which the place provides. The test of his success will not be the amount of information he possesses on leaving, but the extent to which he can turn his mind readily and flexibly to the work of further learning, and to practical application of that which he has partially learned.

What this requires is a good foundation in several of the instrumental parts of knowledge, such as language, mathematics, logic, and the rules of the scientific game.

¹ *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1921.

Mrs. Gerould is emphatically right in saying that no man can be called educated who has not a good working mastery of his native language. One of the strangest of current illusions is the idea that grammar need not be studied. We are constantly told that grammar, parsing, syntax and the like are a mere pedant's game, and we see the result in a slipshodness of speech quite disgraceful in view of the time and money we spend on schooling, and in a newspaper press, the writers of which seem deliberately to prefer to attach a plural predicate to a singular subject and *vice versâ*, to substitute an adjective for an adverb, and to ignore the rules of punctuation. If grammar were the mere superfluity that common estimation makes it, this might be tolerable. But it is not. Grammar is as essential to clear thinking as the four rules of arithmetic are to correct calculation. It is the logic of language; and ignorance or neglect of it is on a par with the use of a wrong term in a syllogism, or with confusion about the place-value of figures in a sum. I am not contending that great artistry in the use of language is essential to education, for that is a gift of the gods, confined to the few. What is required is competent craftsmanship, a thing which honest work will give to any person of normal capacity.

It is folly to think of estimating a man's capabilities by asking how much he knows of a given subject. For this is often a matter of accident. To be sure, if a person has long been engaged in the study, teaching or practice of some art or science, you will naturally expect from him considerable knowledge of that art or science. Even so, you would be much better advised to inquire how he would go about to study a new subject than what he knows of a

familiar one. If Mr. Edison really engages his employees on the basis of such questions regarding general information as have been published, it would be surprising to find in his plant the high level of general competence which its productions seem to imply. What an employer needs to know is the amount and kind of mental discipline a prospective employee has undergone. Can he be trusted to deal intelligently with new facts, with unprecedented situations, with questions the answers to which are not on record in works of reference? There is more knowledge in an encyclopaedia than any man can carry in his memory. But the encyclopaedia cannot work for you; and the man of vast erudition, — the Dominie Sampson type, — has not usually been found a model of wisdom or practical efficiency.

v

Thus far, then, of the books which furnish us with mental tools. But Francis Bacon would remind us that studies serve “for delight” and “for ornament,” as well as “for ability.” Our conclusion, respecting the last group, is that the quest of ability is in some measure like the pursuit of the rainbow: its goal is never attained, though the path be lightened and beautified by the varied colours streaming from the unattainable. Do we not, however, escape from the tyranny of books when we turn from the literature which has a duty-aspect to that which promises only delight and ornament?

The answer must be that in this pleasanter field we encounter a tyranny as exacting, though, to be sure, not as serious in its nature or consequences, as that to which

we are subjected in the field of knowledge. Here, however, the tyranny is more indirect, and there is more humour in its incidence. I would indicate its operation by the observation that it is often more distressing to find what books people know than what they do not. One recalls Herbert Spencer's rebuke to his over-skilful companion at the billiard-table: "The way I play billiards shows that I have used the game as a rational recreation. The way *you* play billiards is a proof of a wasted life."

The direct tyrant is the cult of the latest thing, but indirectly we are confronting the masked and insidious despotism of the literary fashion-monger and his subtle organization. We all know the kind of creature of whom it was said that "you could see his culture lying on him in lumps." Much reading seems to be a quest for materials of conversation, instead of one for spiritual satisfaction and mental enrichment. The test for graduation into many circles is a knowledge of what the momentarily fashionable author has said, not an individual judgment on the worth of what he has said. For myself, almost every dinner-table conversation is a humiliation. My ignorance of the literary gods of the hour is almost as extensive and peculiar as Mr. Samuel Weller's knowledge of London. There is a fashion in books as arbitrary and tyrannical as fashion in dress; and one is more "out of it" by reason of sixteenth-to-nineteenth-century reading than by reason of a pre-war evening suit. The unwritten law seems to be, "Thou shalt not cite an author whom thy table neighbors have not read." And when thou hast read nothing written since the Armistice, and thy neighbors have read nothing written before it, thou findest thyself

up against it. It is very terrible, after you have sinfully wasted precious days on the Essays of Lord Acton and the Letters of Omar Khayyam Fitzgerald, to find yourself in a company that demands, at the point of the epigram, your opinion of *Moon-Calf* and *Winesburg, Ohio*, which you have not read.

No excuse is acceptable; that is why it is such a privilege to retreat into a calmer atmosphere, where one may, without blushing, recall so obsolete a distinction as that drawn by Schopenhauer between reading and thinking. For in print one may dare to remember that reading is either a quest for data for thinking, or a substitute for thought. It is either a stimulant or a narcotic. It is profitless unless you bring to your author, — I dare not say, with Milton, “a judgment equal or superior” to his own, but, in any case, a judgment independent of his. From him you are to get facts and arguments, or new insights, or a new revelation of the powers of language. But he is not to think for you. And do we not also verify in our own experience that other dictum of Schopenhauer, that it is as possible to over-read as to over-eat?

This particular danger is incurred chiefly in our reading for entertainment. Few of us are in serious danger of over-feeding our minds with philosophy, science, religion, history or poetry. But multitudes of people undoubtedly do over-feed them with fiction.

I speak as an enthusiastic lover of fiction, wholly devoid of puritanical or other prejudice against it. To enjoy good fiction seems to me as natural and wholesome as to enjoy good wine; but over-indulgence is as possible and as dangerous in the one as it used to be in the other. The

practical problem is to determine what proportion of our necessarily limited time and power of attention may reasonably be allowed to this indulgence.

Being under iron compulsion to spare but the smallest fraction of my reading time for novels, I very seldom read a new one; never until I have the assurance of friends, on whose literary judgment I can safely rely, that the newcomer is worth the time and effort. The world is full of good old novels, most of which are safe; for in this matter one can trust the maxim which, applied theologically, so impressed Newman: *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum*. There is an immense range of fiction that has survived the test of the judgment of successive generations of readers, or of several nations. Hence one may confidently adopt the policy of my friend Bert Taylor, most delightful and lamented of humorists: "When a new novel comes out, I read an old one."

In view of the unending multitude of volumes poured from the press, and the tyranny and the practical difficulties it involves, I have sometimes wondered whether we may not expect an attempt to cure it by the method generally adopted among us to cure analogous evils; namely, by the setting up of a society or movement devoted to the cause of temperance in the reading of books. I like to let my imagination rove over the vast possibilities awaiting the pioneer — the Wayne B. Wheeler or the Lucy Page Gaston — of such an enterprise. One can see the movement organized and militant, with its drives and lobbies, and its annual flourish of statistics. It will presumably have its varied shades, — its moderate right wing of persons pledged to read no more than a specified number

of volumes per year, and its extreme left wing, demanding total abstinence from all books whatsoever, and the statutory or constitutional prohibition of their production. Undoubtedly, such a movement would do some good; and undoubtedly its zealots would be monocular as to its beneficence, and as blind as Nelson at Copenhagen to the huge and mountainous evils they would inflict upon us. But one hopes that, on the whole, the community will prefer education and persuasion to pledges and prohibitions in this matter.

A question one often asks oneself is whether, in the matter of the discriminating appreciation of literary style, our standards are deteriorating or improving. It is certain that no nation reads more than America, and that America never read so much as in this generation. Are these newly awakened multitudes experiencing the joy of appreciating fine work more or less than did the immensely more limited reading publics to which Lowell and Emerson, Macaulay and De Quincey, Goldsmith and Fielding, Addison and Pope, Milton and Jeremy Taylor, or Shakespeare and Spenser, appealed? The answer, I think, is not a mere matter of guesswork. There is certainly nowhere any finer appreciation than these giants of the older time enjoyed. There are no people of finer taste than of old; but there are incalculably more people of good taste. Whoever has kept track of the best seller and the largest circulator in public libraries during the last few years, must find in the improvement of its quality matter for congratulation. Dear as books have been of late, the limitless circulation accorded to books of the calibre of *The Education of Henry Adams*, to the fine champagne-

like volumes of Mr. Lytton Strachey, and even to that most entertaining of all Mr. Wells's works of fiction, *The Outline of History*, is a proof that our machinery for the mass-production of educated minds is turning out a product not altogether deficient in discrimination and appreciation.

VI

There is one danger against which it is especially incumbent upon a lecturer to warn his readers: I mean the use of the lecture-habit as a kind of dissipation. In these arid days there is real danger of our producing a certain number of lecture-drunkards; and it is surely hard on a well-meaning lecture-vendor to find himself unwittingly functioning as a surrogate for the partially departed saloon-keeper. Who does not know the type I have in mind? — the person of wide and varied culture, who never reads, but gets it all in pemmican form from Professor Postpropter of the University Extension Society and Dr. Ignoratio Elenchi of the Chautauqua. Far be it from me to urge that lecture courses are quite devoid of justification; but they are abused if made a substitute for independent study and thinking. Nobody can profit so much from a lecture as the man who has prepared it.

The first time this evil came home to me was when, some years ago, I was working up a lecture on Erasmus, and, of course, having "the time of my life" doing it. A friend came into my office and began turning over the books on my table: the *Familiaria Colloquia*, the *Encomium Moriae*, the Letters, Froude's book, Seeböhm's *Oxford Reformers*, and so forth. "Well," he grunted, "I shall

enjoy listening to you, but I am glad you have to read all this stuff instead of me." What a frightful probe to one's conscience! What an atrocious result of one's well-meant effort to introduce this man to the delight that comes of knowing the life and times and works of the immortal Dutchman!

I trust I have justified my title. There is a tyranny exercised by books. But if this experience leads to pessimism, the pessimism will be false. What the facts as contemplated should move us to is rather joy in the infinite field of knowledge and discovery accessible to us, and the possibility of endless growth implied in that infinite nature in ourselves which is the source of the incongruity between what our spirits demand and what the world of time and the finite can give.

XI

ARE WE WISER OR BETTER THAN OUR FATHERS?

(1922)

THIS is a question which, we may be sure, has been asked in every generation since mankind emerged into reflective self-consciousness. How do we compare with the men who have gone before us? Are we physically as fine as they? Are our brains as good, or better, or worse? What is our moral rating, measured against theirs? Is our chance of solving the problems of our time equal or superior or inferior to theirs? Is there really such a thing as *progress* in the world? Evolution there is; change there is; is it for the better or for the worse?

Until our time, as far as surviving records show, such questions have generally been answered in the negative. We may find in Homer the pained self-depreciation with which the poet contrasts the puny men of his own time with the giants and demigods of the past. For him his time was one of degeneracy. Mankind was growing worse, not better; weaker, not stronger. And from Homer to the immediate predecessors of Darwin the note continued pretty much the same. There is no misconstruing it in Tacitus and Seneca. For early Christianity, this world

was bankrupt and hopeless. St. Paul was convinced that without the hope of a miraculous renewal of the world (which he confidently expected in his own time) those who held the high and exacting Christian ideal would be "of all men most miserable." And undoubtedly *one* of the reasons which prompted the Founder of Christianity to utter his famous command against resisting evil, was the sense that resistance was hopeless; the evil in the world, *quâ* man, was omnipotent.

Christianity thus, as Father Tyrrell expresses it, affirmed "a proximate pessimism," but balanced it with "an ultimate optimism." That is, so far as man and his resources were concerned, the outlook held no hope. Only because the extremity of man's failure constituted God's opportunity, — only because what earth could not accomplish was to be achieved from heaven or in heaven, — was the prospect bearable.

This very deep note of Christian pessimism, as respects all things purely human and natural, is paralleled in Buddhism. It has, indeed, been urged of late that the common interpretation of Buddhism as pessimistic is false to the facts. Buddha had a scheme of salvation. He did, to be sure, give up this world, and all the possibilities of finite individualized existence, as a bad job; but he taught that it was possible for man to escape the wheel of re-incarnation, to emancipate himself from his own finitude, with its inexorable accompaniment of passions and egotisms that breed only evil; and, in the passionless absorption of Nirvana, to attain ultimate reality and beatitude. Yet surely this, from the point of view of our question, is pessimistic enough. It involves a more uncompromising

condemnation of this world than does the Christian pessimism; for, according to that, human society was at least capable of a *miraculous* renewal. The celestial city could at all events be conceived as "coming down out of heaven from God" and being established on the earth, although not as being founded and built on earth. In other words, it was not inherently impossible that in time and space, and under finite conditions, an ideally righteous and happy society might be created, even though man were incapable of creating it for himself.

On the whole, then, we may say that throughout history the answers given to the fundamental question whether mankind is growing, or can grow, better, have been emphatically negative. The verdict of deeper experience tends always to be pessimistic. For, in proportion as men live deeply, they learn to see through the tinsel satisfactions and trumpety achievements to which the mass pin their hopes of happiness, and to grow increasingly aware of the impassable gulf between what the spirit of man by its very nature demands and what a finite world can possibly yield.

But one of the many curious symptoms of the age in which our lot is cast, is a mixture of great self-depreciation with excessive self-confidence. Both are apparently carried to the extreme. The combination is paradoxical; yet the evidence of both attitudes (often present in the same person) is abundant.

In the past, the attitude of self-depreciation, coupled as it was with reverence for predecessors, was at least consistent, and therefore intelligible. That men who believed their ancestors to have been much greater, wiser

and better than themselves, should have thought very little of themselves and their possibilities, was naturally to be expected. Their notions about the "good old times," the Golden Age, and the superhuman or semi-divine founders of their tribes, governments, religions, laws and institutions, may have been, and in most cases doubtless were, completely unhistorical; but that with such beliefs there should have gone a sense of their own inferiority was reasonable enough.

Nowadays, as far as one man's limited observation, and an admittedly inadequate study of contemporary literature (especially the literature of evolution and revolt) may be trusted, the notion seems to be that our ancestors were first animals, then savages, and then fools. It is often implied, and frequently declared, that wisdom was born with us. We possess enormous resources, both within our own brains and bosoms and in our command of the forces of the outer world, which our forebears did not have at their command. And yet, by those who maintain this, it is no less emphatically laid down that all that we, with our superiority, are attempting or achieving is wrong and disastrous; that the world is in a far worse muddle than ever before, and is constantly growing worse.

It is not my purpose here to attempt an explanation of this contradiction. I should hardly know how to go about such a task, the only surmisable solution being highly uncomplimentary to the intelligence of minds which hold these unassimilable beliefs in combination. What I propose is to examine both terms of the contradiction, with a view to discovering, if possible, whether either of the irreconcilable theses, considered separately, is justified.

Let us begin with the completely changed attitude towards the past which present-day writers represent. Of this we could have no better example than Prof. James Harvey Robinson's volume entitled *The Mind in the Making*. He expresses it much more moderately than some other writers, but none the less unmistakably. Experience seems to have disgusted and disillusionized him about all those attitudes and tendencies of his contemporaries which are traceable to heredity or tradition, and so to have brought about in him an intransigent hostility to the past. There can be no question that Dr. Robinson's statement of this case has won a remarkably wide and sympathetic hearing, if not perhaps an equally wide acceptance. His book has been far more popular than most treatises dealing with such serious topics. Its circulation has probably been a surprise even to one who, as a graceful and charming historian, has been accustomed to extensive circulations.

But in the present work he is no longer writing as an historian. His anger with the past, and with its surviving products in our own minds and institutions, has led him to turn aside from his own field in the hope of setting the world right concerning other matters.

I have referred to his historical work. Since I shall here be compelled to criticize certain phases of his new book, it is with the greater pleasure that I express my sense of indebtedness for the interest and profit with which I have read several of his historical volumes. But whoever has followed him at all has observed a singular change coming over him during the last few years.

For example: nearly two years ago we had from Dr. Robinson a very whole-hearted eulogy of Mr. Wells's

Outline of History. I was one of the many who were puzzled by this, since my own reading of Wells's work had led me to conclusions in many ways unfavorable to it, and these amateur judgments of mine had been fully borne out by the opinions of such expert historians as I had consulted or read on the subject.

The puzzle is cleared up by Dr. Robinson's *Mind in the Making*. Mr. Wells caught him in the revolting temper, and expressed for him many of those bitter feelings against existing institutions and the existing social order that had been boiling in his own soul for a long time, but had been repressed. It needs no prophet now to discern that his commendation was given rather to Mr. Wells's opinions about current events than to his insight in interpreting or his skill in presenting the events of the past, with their causes and consequences.

At one place in his book Dr. Robinson says:

"Thousands of argumentative works have been written to vent a grudge. However stately their reasoning, it may be nothing but rationalizing, stimulated by the most commonplace of all motives. A history of philosophy and theology could be written in terms of grouches, wounded pride, and aversions, and it would be far more instructive than the usual treatment of these themes."¹

When he says "thousands," Dr. Robinson is not speaking quite statistically. His generalization is somewhat sweeping; although, to be sure, we have all found many passages in controversial works, and some in works of philosophy and even theology, for which we are tempted

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

to account by Dr. Robinson's explanation. But I doubt whether in the whole range of controversial writing one could find a single book of which this account is more clearly true than it is of Dr. Robinson's own. It needs little peering between his lines to see that he has long felt cramped in his professorship, and has resented the silence to which his sense of propriety condemned him concerning many matters on which, now that he is outside Columbia, he feels free to speak. His now openly avowed sympathy for radicals, pacifists, and apologists for Bolshevism, and his bitter contempt for the Lusk Committee and all its works, must have lain heavily on his soul so long as he retained a position in which he did not feel free to speak his mind about them.

In his present volume, Prof. Robinson, encouraged by Mr. Wells, has imitated that gentleman's rashness. He has turned from the field of history, in which he possesses expert qualification, to write a book on subjects with which his acquaintance is obviously somewhat superficial. Since he is an admirer of Mr. Wells, he will not mind my saying that, when writing on philosophy, ethics and psychology, he presents a spectacle very similar to that afforded by Mr. Wells holding forth on Greek and Roman history.

What now are Dr. Robinson's positions? First: that the processes by which we come by our beliefs are such as, in most cases, to invalidate those beliefs; or, at best, to give no promise that they will be true ones. In this, of course, he is mainly in the right. "The bulk of mankind," said Swift, with brutal truth, "are as well qualified for flying as for thinking." We like to *think* that

our ideas and beliefs are due to pure, disinterested reasoning and love of truth. It certainly cannot be said of any man that *all* his beliefs are due to such reasoning; and, with a large proportion of mankind, it is probably true that no fraction of their beliefs is due to it. Instead, our holding or rejecting of doctrines, ideas and theories is due mainly to tradition, to authority, to suggestion, to imitation (conscious or unconscious) of our elders and neighbours, to prejudice, and to that most famous scape-goat of the psycho-analysts and pragmatists, "rationalizing."

Now what is "rationalizing"? It is a sweetly felicitous word, adopted by the psycho-analytic school to describe a process, or series of processes, with which, by definition and by insistent explanation, reason, in any proper sense of the word, has nothing whatever to do. They describe a mode of psychic action of which the dynamics are egotism, anger, resentment, fear, or jealousy; and, strictly following the famous *lucus a non lucendo* principle, they call it rationalizing. Here, too, they proceed to illustrate that penetrating saying of Pascal's about the world's way of "paying itself with words"; for having, not indeed a new word, but an old word which they have applied in a new, paradoxical and inverted sense, they think they have a new thought. And so much importance do they attach to this discovery that Prof. Robinson is not without hope that the assimilation and application of it may change the whole face of the world, and lead to the settlement of problems otherwise insoluble.

Their discovery, if I understand them aright, amounts to this:

a. That human beings are by nature extremely egotistic, self-loving and self-centred creatures. They have found this out.

b. That whatsoever we call our own, or identify ourselves with, we jealously defend and assert, not on grounds of pure reason, but from the selfsame motive that leads a dog to fight for a bone, however bare the bone may be.

c. That this expression of animal self-assertiveness extends to the justifications we offer for those collections of prejudices, egotisms, and ignorances that we dignify by the name of beliefs, opinions, or convictions.

Mr. Robinson is sure that the Pragmatists, whom he loves, and the defenders of Bolshevism and radicalism, to whom he leans (though he falls short, by an unspecified margin, of sharing their beliefs), do *not* get their opinions by the discreditable process thus exposed. He implies that if a man changes his beliefs, the newly adopted positions are to be taken as reached by a process more reputable than "rationalizing." Whether this would apply to a radical who turned conservative — who, obeying the plea for re-examination of tenets, was moved to abandon (say) Professor Robinson's present opinions and embrace those he formerly held — is not quite clear. But he certainly gives the impression that those of us who respect our ancestors, and have anything like a decent regard for the opinions of mankind through the ages, do, on the whole, follow the "rationalizing" way.

As may possibly have been gathered already, I do not think that this discovery of the Pragmatists and psychoanalysts is quite so new as they take it to be. It seems to

me that our ancestors also had made it; only they made less fuss about it, and did not dress it up in a pseudo-scientific jargon. What the new school, with ironical, if unconscious, humour, calls "rationalizing," the old school called telling lies or trumping up excuses. It was not a disciple of Freud or William James who wrote the sentence about the heart of man being "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." This was a thinker of a somewhat earlier school; but his generalization could only have been penned after a considerable observation of the tricks which we are now invited to call "rationalizing." Again, in the ancient proverb about the wish being father to the thought, and in Hudibras Butler's couplet, —

*A man convinc'd against his will
Is of the same opinion still, —*

it would seem that the whole of this precious piece of newly detected wisdom is contained. Our forebears knew that the wish begot the thought in a vast proportion of accepted beliefs and opinions. The psycho-analytic and pragmatic school have thus re-discovered something that was fairly well known a good many centuries ago.

Mr. Robinson has a curious way of attributing to present-day writers the invention of phrases that were current ages before they were born. Thus his idolized Mr. Wells is cited as the *author* of the phrase "muddling through,"¹ which was a stock expression of politicians and critics of politics (not to mention also of housemaids and Covent Garden porters) in England decades before

¹ "Most human progress has been, as Wells expresses it, a mere 'muddling through.'" — *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

Wells was born. And elsewhere, dealing with that peculiar process which goes on in the mind of a small boy when staring at his neighbours in a street-car, or of a young lady who comes out of church with no ideas about the sermon, but with detailed information about what the other ladies were wearing, and remarking that in such cases there is no ulterior motive to the staring, he says that this is "what Veblen so well calls 'idle curiosity.'" No doubt; but it is also what my grandmother so well called idle curiosity, and occasionally clouded me for, when I was a small boy; she having learned both the phrase and the method of treatment from her own grandmother.

I suppose it is Mr. Robinson's generous fashion of thus attributing to his current literary favorites the authorship of phrases which they learned in their nurseries, that explains his otherwise unaccountable conviction that the process called "rationalizing" has only just been found out. Were it not for this, he might remember certain accounts of this process that, at some time or other, he must have come across in books of older date. There is, for instance, a fairly full and open-eyed account of it in Lord Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*, published nearly thirty years ago. There are other accounts of it in such books as Lecky's *Rationalism*, which goes back to the eighteen-sixties. Somewhat earlier still, Francis Bacon (whom Mr. Robinson annoyingly persists in miscalling "Lord Bacon") wrote one of the finest accounts of this very process ever given to the world; a much clearer-eyed and better-stated account, indeed, than I have met with in any of the recent psycho-analytic or pragmatic schools. Nor is even Bacon to be credited with originality in his

thought, since he too was able to draw upon the famous distinctions between false and true opinion and rationally ascertained truth which emerged from the cross-examinations inflicted by Socrates on his neighbours, and reported, with variations and dramatic enrichments, by an obsolete fellow called Plato, some twenty-three hundred years ago.

Mr. Robinson is extremely angry with theologians and philosophers; but especially with philosophers, whom he regards as the greatest of self-deceivers and misleaders. His book gives the impression that most of the thinking of the past, and especially its philosophic thinking, has been one-half deliberate falsification, and the other half sheer blunder, due to the fact that the philosophers were unaware of the "rationalizing" process. A typical passage expressive of our author's positions is the following:

"The truest and most profound observations on Intelligence have in the past been made by the poets and, in recent times, by story-writers. They have been keen observers and recorders and reckoned freely with the emotions and sentiments. Most philosophers, on the other hand, have exhibited a grotesque ignorance of man's life, and have built up systems that are elaborate and imposing, but quite unrelated to actual human affairs. They have almost consistently neglected the actual process of thought and have set the mind off as something apart to be studied by itself. *But no such mind, exempt from bodily processes, animal impulses, savage traditions, infantile impressions, conventional reactions, and traditional knowledge, ever existed*, even in the case of the most abstract of metaphysicians. Kant entitled his great work *A Critique of*

Pure Reason. But to the modern student of mind pure reason seems as mythical as the pure gold, transparent as glass, with which the celestial city is paved.”¹

Where have we heard something like this before? Surely it is the lines of the *Biglow Papers* that come haunting back into our minds:

John P.

Robinson he

Said they didn't know everything down in Judee! —

with the difference that Dr. J. H. Robinson rather suggests that they didn't know *anything* down in Athens or Königsberg, or connected points.

This judgment concerning philosophers in general, and Kant in particular, may not throw much light on them, but it throws a good deal on Dr. Robinson. One is left wondering how much study of Kant preceded this light-hearted dismissal of “pure reason” as mythical. No doubt if Kant had been as “grotesquely ignorant” as Dr. Robinson supposes him concerning “bodily processes, animal impulses, savage traditions, infantile impressions, conventional reactions, and traditional knowledge,” he must be for us a very unsatisfactory thinker. But the trouble is, he really did know quite a good deal about these things; although it did not lie in his way, in connection with his two famous treatises on the *Pure* and *Practical Reason* respectively, to deal with them at great length. Kant had been a careful reader of Bacon. He places before the *Critique of Pure Reason* a striking quotation from

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

the *Instauratio Magna*. And as a reader of Bacon, he could not but be familiar with that famous exposure of the "idols or false images" before which the average man, in his blindness, bows down: the Idols of the Tribe, the Cave, the Theatre, and the Market-place: which, as I have already remarked, contains more real wisdom than any exposition of "rationalizing" by a modern Pragmatist or psycho-analyst that has yet come in my way.

Here is illustrated the difficulty the shoemaker is always liable to encounter when he goes beyond his last. For Professor Robinson's purposes as an historian, there was no particular reason why he should trouble to familiarize himself with the very difficult thought of Immanuel Kant, especially since that thought is rendered twice as difficult as it need be by Kant's atrocious literary style. But when it comes to writing on fundamental matters of philosophy and psychology, a closer study is necessary of so epoch-making a thinker as Kant than Dr. Robinson appears to have made.

Had it come in his way to find out more exactly what Kant was driving at, he would have perceived that the question about the "pure reason," although nowadays generally neglected, is one of fundamental importance for all thinkers, and especially all scientific thinkers or workers. It is a question concerning the validity of those beliefs without which there can be no thinking at all, and consequently no experience. Kant's difficulty is, How can there be such a thing as a science of nature? How can we make affirmations, with certainty that they are true, concerning matters which go not only beyond our personal experience, but beyond the experience, actual or possible,

of all mankind? Obviously, if we cannot do this, science is impossible; for its very first requisite is that we shall be able to affirm the *universality and necessity* of those sequences and relations among phenomena which we generalize under the name of "natural laws." When we affirm that the speed of light is so-and-so, or that bodies in space attract each other "with a force varying directly as the product of the masses and inversely as the square of their distances apart," we certainly do not mean that these things are true only so far as this astronomer or that physicist has been able to investigate. We mean that they have been true throughout all time and are now true throughout all space. But how can we know this? How can we attain *certainty* in such matters? If all knowledge is from experience, then of that which lies beyond experience there can be no knowledge. That was Kant's problem.

Now if the "pure reason" is, as Mr. Robinson says, as mythical as the transparent gold of the celestial city, the somewhat inconvenient conclusion follows that we can be sure of none of these things. Our convictions about mathematical truth and the fundamental axioms of science can have no surer warrant than any of the baseless prejudices which Mr. Robinson is so eager to clear out of our minds.

The curious thing is that it is precisely *scientific* thinking which enlists Dr. Robinson's whole-souled admiration. He is constantly urging us to observe its marvelous precision, dispassionateness and thoroughness; how certain its results are; what a contrast there is between our progressiveness in science and our stagnation in morals, politics, and the like. He is most anxious to force upon us the

lesson that our existing opinions concerning right and wrong, and political parties, and international relations, and Bolshevism, and pacifism, are widely astray because they have not been tested and verified in the same fashion as scientific hypotheses have to be before they can win acceptance.

And yet he seems unconscious that the very man who established the credibility of those fundamental axioms and postulates upon which all science rests, was this same Immanuel Kant of whom he speaks so slightly. Before Kant's time, David Hume, following in the track of Locke and Berkeley, had carried to its logical conclusion the sceptical sensationalistic philosophy, according to which all knowledge begins with sense-impressions and ends with ideas which are nothing in the world but fainter copies of sense-impressions. The result is that all abstract or general propositions are fictions, representing only an unaccountable "propensity to feign," as Hume calls it, to which our nature is somehow liable. This means that our belief in the axioms of Euclid, in the universality of cause and effect, and in such laws as gravitation, is reduced somewhat below the level of the savage's belief in ghosts, or that of a man with delirium tremens in pink elephants. For the savage and the alcoholic patient do at least have a basis of *supposed* sense-perception to assign for the reality of the ghosts and the pink elephants; whereas, according to Hume, the laws of mathematics and of nature have no basis at all except the natural tendency to fiction.

In other words, Hume ends in a complete subjectivism, fatal to all objective reality. He himself was aware of this result of his inquiry; and nothing is stranger than

the fashion in which many later thinkers have assumed his premises without sharing his perception of the conclusions to which they inevitably lead. But Kant saw the point; he avowedly began where Hume left off, and tackled the problem Hume had brought to view but left unsolved. It was the fact that Hume's principles destroy the very basis of mathematics and of all science that awoke Kant, as he says, out of his "dogmatic slumber," and set him upon that great inquiry into the grounds of objective certainty and the validity of "synthetic judgments *a priori*" of which the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the monument.

In much the same ready and easy fashion, Mr. Robinson disposes of Plato. With him, we read, there originated a body of metaphysics out of which others have fabricated "a system of arrogant mystical dogmatism." (Unfortunately the arrogant *Platonic* dogmatists are not named.) Dr. Robinson's judgment of metaphysics is expressed in the following revealing sentence:

"I am inclined to rate it, like smoking, as a highly gratifying indulgence to those who like it, and, as indulgences go, relatively innocent."¹

To him, metaphysics is a mere game, which, like a certain road described by Dickens, "begins nowhere and ends in a bog." Having in a few sentences described the scepticism and the antinomies to which the Eleatic philosophy leads, he proceeds to account for Platonism as a way of mental escape "from the welter of our mutable world into a realm of assurance." This may have been, as Mr. Robinson implies, a fruitless quest; the assurance of having

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

penetrated through the phantasmagoria of appearances to reality may be delusive; but, even for him, the only alternative to a renewal of the quest must be the doctrine that appearance *is* reality: which is itself metaphysical; only it is bad metaphysics, because it involves inextricable self-contradictions.

As everybody knows, Plato sought ultimate reality in the realm of archetypal Ideas. Dr. Robinson's account of the genesis of this doctrine is really lovely. It "was a new and sophisticated re-publication of *savage animism*. It invited lesser minds than his to indulge in all sorts of noble vagueness and impertinent jargon, which continue to curse our public discussions of human affairs. He consecrated one of the chief foibles of the human mind and elevated it to a religion."¹

That is to say, the savage ghost-theory, or, lower still, the animal's impulsive assumption that any moving thing (*e.g.* an umbrella or newspaper blown by the wind) is alive, was the origin of Plato's belief in the eternal archetypes of the things of earth!

Now there are some of us who think that, instead of Plato being the source of the "impertinent jargon" which continues to curse our discussions of human affairs, we get very much more of such jargon from those who, unlike Dr. Robinson, have never read him. Nobody now supposes that Plato did, or that any man of his time or ours could have done, a *final* work in philosophy; any more than Aristotle did in politics. But it does seem certain, to those of us who seek mental stimulus and spiritual refreshment in the writings of these old mas-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108 f.

ters, that a course of training in them, so far from incapacitating people for grappling with contemporary problems, would be the best possible discipline in preparation for that task. These pitiable, credulous politicians of whom Dr. Robinson complains, — are they Platonists or Aristotelians? Did the Lusk Committee derive its intolerance from the study of Socrates? Have our suppressors of innovating thought caught their temper from Aristotle?

Even if Plato had been as great a hindrance to mental emancipation as Dr. Robinson alleges, still he would be entitled to have his ideas summarized, if at all, truly and not falsely, and their genesis rightly explained. It is really to be desired that readers of Dr. Robinson should take the pains to look up the seventh chapter of Walter Pater's *Plato and Platonism*, for a *true* account of the origin of the doctrine of Ideas, and an explanation of the fundamental difference between savage animism and that belief in a Soul of the World to which the same name is sometimes most misleadingly applied.

I say nothing here of the profound disrespect to the great minds of antiquity which such criticism displays. That is a matter of taste; and if Dr. Robinson, in his revolt against academicism, has revolted against its standards of urbanity, as well as against its social ideas, that is his affair. He is moved to take off his hat in reverence to Messrs. Wells, Veblen and Dewey, to speak of Rousseau as "a distinguished philosopher," and at the same time to sneer at Kant and Plato. So be it. But even a "voice crying in the wilderness" about the necessity of men's using their minds "in fundamentally new

ways" ought not to account for other people's beliefs by explanations that are demonstrably incorrect. That way of using the mind is neither new nor commendable.

As with Dr. Robinson's philosophy, so it would seem to be with his economics. Dealing with the absorption of the present generation in business, he writes as follows:

"We no longer make things for the sake of making them, but for money. The chair is not made to sit on, but for profit; the soap is no longer prepared for purposes of cleanliness, but to be sold for profit. Practically nothing catches our eye in the way of writing that was written for its own sake and not for money. . . . When houses were built to live in, and wheat and cattle grown to eat, these essential industries took care of themselves."¹

Again we see the danger of the specialist in one department laying down the law in a field essentially foreign to him. How else can we explain such a series of false antitheses in the work of a serious thinker? Is Dr. Robinson really unable to think of such a thing as a duplex or complex motive? Where is the difficulty in supposing that a man may have *two* ends in view in doing a piece of work, — rendering a service and earning his wages? What possible justification is there for saying that any work for which a man receives pay was not done for its own sake?

I hope Dr. Robinson has received some handsome royalties on the volume I am discussing. If he has, does that discredit all his statements? Does the fact that he

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163 f.

has received pay for his labour prove that nothing he says is true? If it does not in his case, why should it in other men's?

And, really, all this talk about not making things "for the sake of making them, but for money," is so fantastic and worded with such dangerous looseness that one hardly knows how to deal with it seriously. Dr. Robinson can scarcely suppose that things ever were made anywhere "for the sake of making them." No generation ever ignored altogether the question of utility or aesthetic satisfaction. Whether the ulterior utility be measured in terms of money-profit or in any other way, still it must come in as a motive if any active or creative work whatsoever is to be done. The chair to-day *is* made to sit on *and* for profit; much profit there would be in it if it couldn't be sat on! The soap, in order that it may be sold for profit, must be prepared for purposes of cleanliness. Houses *are* built to live in, and have to be livable in order that the builder or vendor may make the profit he seeks. And wheat and cattle are grown to eat.

If Dr. Robinson only means that in present industry the profit-motive is over-emphasized and the utility and other human satisfactions unduly subordinated, it is unfortunate indeed that he should have expressed himself in such misleading terms. For what in him may be mere looseness of language is actually, as every reader of revolutionary literature, and every listener to street-corner oratory, knows, the expression of the literal belief of hosts of preachers of destructive innovation.

Under any conceivable system of society, — whether capitalistic, socialistic, or communistic, — all work would

have to show profit in some form: it would have to be exchangeable for more than its bare cost in effort, and would have to be done for the sake of what it would thus buy.

Dr. Robinson has here, no doubt unwittingly, countenanced the absurdest fallacy of the soap-box radical. It is lamentable indeed when we see the street-corner agitator teaching men to ask for impossibilities because he reasons from a tissue of fallacies. But, sad as this spectacle is, it is not perhaps surprising; we have learned that we have to expect this kind of thing from the soap-box. It is new, however, and most disheartening, to find a justly famous ex-member of the faculty of Columbia using language which lends itself to such perilous misunderstanding.

And yet, despite the grave defects I have specified, and many others of less importance, Professor Robinson's book, in so far as it is a plea for open-mindedness and fair-mindedness, and a challenge to us to test and be sure of the grounds of our beliefs, and to retain none for which we have not worthy and valid reasons, will do, one hopes, upon the whole, more good than harm. That with such faults as I have exposed it will do some harm seems to me certain. Nobody can think that among the faults of the present rising generation in America is to be counted an undue deference for authority, an exaggerated reverence for the past. The brisk young gentlemen in Greenwich Village, or on the road thereto, scarcely needed the exhortation of Dr. Robinson to think cheaply of the wisdom of their ancestors, or meanly of such monumental figures in the history of thought as

Kant and Plato. Nor did they need his encouragement to protest against the hard facts analyzed by political economy, or against the limits of possibility generally. Nevertheless, if they pay attention to the sound elements in his book, as well as to the unsound ones, they will necessarily acquire a way of thinking that will lead them to correct not only their own previous errors but Dr. Robinson's as well. And in the grave difficulties which are to-day confronting the entire world, there can be no doubt about their need to use their minds in ways fundamentally new to *them*, though not, fortunately, altogether new in the world.

It is this better side of his book that enables one to understand the appreciation expressed for it by many people, who feel sorely the need for new knowledge and new ways of thinking, but are not concerned to check up or expose its errors and misstatements as I have been constrained to do.

Returning now to our main subject (which, despite appearances, I have not forgotten): we are wiser than our fathers, if at all, on Dr. Robinson's showing, in one respect only. We do know more than they about the forces and resources of nature, and we have learned to apply them so as to meet many of our needs.

Against this, however, there is the heavy set-off that we are bewildered, and have a feeling of helplessness in the presence of these giant spirits that we have called from the vasty deep, these genii that have responded to our rubbing upon the Aladdin's lamp of knowledge.

This is the essential and deep-reaching tragedy of our time. Here in America we have not as yet done justice

to the profound pessimism of such diverse thinkers as Henry Adams and Mark Twain; or, rather, to what is sound in the reasons alleged for it. We have lost the spiritual anchorage of our fathers, and have not yet found a stronger one for ourselves. Meantime, the walls of the world on every hand have fallen before us, and we peer into undreamed abysses of time and space and seemingly mindless force, that well may terrify us, as in the young morning of science they terrified Pascal. We are like the sailor in Sir William Watson's poem:

*The awful, homeless spaces scare our souls;
And, half regretful, we remember then
Our Eden lost; as some gray mariner
May think of the far fields where he was bred,
And woody ways unbreathed on by the sea;
Though more familiar now the ocean paths
Gleam, and the stars his fathers never knew.*

There is to-day a million-fold more power in mankind's hands than there was in the eighteenth century; but the great question asked by Henry Adams, — whether we are using that power or it is blindly driving us, — is not so easy to answer. Even in the eighteenth century the available power had grown so great that men dared no longer entrust it to single rulers or to oligarchies. Democracy was the desperate remedy for the waxing evil.

But what now? Is there any increase in men's practical wisdom and directive ability at all commensurate with the increase of available power? Has there been a proportionate growth in the essential humanity and neighborliness of mankind? When we look at many of

the humanitarian activities carried on and the ameliorative laws passed in various lands, the answer seems to be encouragingly affirmative. But when we look at the facts of war, and at the stupid apathy still prevailing, here and elsewhere, with regard to international duties and responsibilities, the prospect appears decidedly less hopeful. One may wonder whether a Julius Caesar, a William the Norman, a Charles Martel, or any of the old-world conquerors, would not have shuddered at the prospect of being able to destroy a whole city by missiles from a pilotless aeroplane, or to sink without trace, by a single blow, a floating castle bearing the population of a city.

Yet this is the sort of power wielded by the directors of military operations to-day; and democracy has evidently not succeeded entirely in eliminating the will to use it. We have, indeed, a hopeful movement against war. I do not waver in the conviction that since the Great War, and because of it, we are much nearer to peace and sound internationalism than we were before, or should have been without it. And yet, the movement against war seems still to be actuated far more by economic and selfishly prudential considerations than by that motive which alone can make it strong and permanently triumphant: I mean a deeper sense of the reality of the spiritual personality in all human beings, and a truer reverence for it.

Nor is it easy to foresee what will come of the vastly multiplied demands entailed by our applications of science upon men's nervous energy and powers of attention. Consider even the manifold distractions, formerly non-existent, which none of us can now escape. Consider

what a handicap these constitute for the student, the scientific searcher, the thinker upon religion and philosophy, the creative artist. News travels with the speed of thought itself. Privacy is well-nigh abolished, and we are even losing our sense of the right to it. Books multiply faster than ever before, and nobody gets time to digest them. Even work that ranks as intellectual, and imperatively demands solitude and concentration, is now done amid perpetual interruptions and distractions fatal to thoroughness and excellence.

All things considered, it is little wonder that this spectacle should have reduced many thoughtful men to pessimism. It needs either a great sturdiness, or a great insensitiveness to the facts and their import, to keep one's faith and one's poise in the face of them.

But still, the pessimism is unjustified. The world *is* growing better.

This conviction is to be vindicated, not by making a cross-section through existing society, but by taking a perspective view and comparing the present with any period of the past. Let us invite the believer in man's degeneracy to say sincerely at what epoch he would actually prefer to have lived. Let him point out any "fifty years of Europe" that he would rather have gone through than the cycle fate has actually assigned to him. Our medieval revivalists, our Crams and Chestertons, are forever singing the praises of the wonderful thirteenth century, and the good old days of constitutional monarchy, monasticism, trade and craft guilds. Would any of them really be willing to exchange this unsatisfactory twentieth century for the adorable thirteenth? Until this question is

answered in the affirmative, by somebody who knows well the historical facts about the thirteenth century, and of whose sincerity we are assured, we shall be justified in regarding the professed preference for the past as a pose.

It cannot, indeed, be maintained that the moral ideals now practically recognized are higher than those proclaimed by the best minds of the past. But it can be maintained that they are higher than those which the past embodied in practice. What is more, they are more generally recognized, and less often cynically violated, than of old.

Our pessimists (*teste* Henry Adams) assume that the process of adapting man to the multifarious and continuous changes of the scientific era must necessarily be as slow and clumsy as that by which animal species in the state of nature are adapted to a changed environment. This is taken for granted when it is not overtly stated. But what evidence is there for it? Mental adaptation does not necessarily require extensive organic modification. The mind and the rational will of man can adjust themselves to new factors and new powers with much greater rapidity than the instinctive and nervous organization of animals can be adapted to changed environment.

Despite the horror we rightly feel over the bloodshed and destructiveness of the Great War, and our nervousness at the instability of the existing peace, we must not forget that the last half-century has really been the most peaceful period in history. Never was there a time of equal length during which so many occasions of quarrel were settled by arbitration or by compromise, and so few led to the arbitrament of the sword.

What is more, democracy, with all its immaturity and all its faults, has, on the whole, made for peace. With the more than doubtful exception of the War of the Secession in America, none of the major wars of the last century occurred between two democracies or was provoked by a democracy. And one good result of the Great War has been a wide extension of the democratic idea and method in government, which of itself constitutes a fair augury of better times.

It would be absurd, of course, to contend that the average man of to-day is wiser or better than the great men of the past, or as wise and good as they. Indeed, to me it seems preposterous to suppose that even our men of light and leading, such as those whom Professor Robinson venerates, are worthy of a moment's comparison with the giants of old whom he despises. His attitude in this matter displays, to my thinking, a curiously distorted standard of measurement and valuation. And I strongly insist that we must, — for our own sake (though not for theirs), — learn to bear ourselves humbly before those whom Felix Adler calls the "Old Masters in religion," as well as in philosophy, literature, and the other fine arts. It is easy enough to speak slightly of ancient thinkers when one does not understand what they were saying, or does not feel the pressure of the problems with which they grappled. But unless we understand them, are aware of their problems, and realize our need of learning from them, we are in darkness, and in our darkness are all too likely to walk over some precipice.

But when we compare the *average* man of to-day with the *average* man of two, or three, or twenty-five centuries

ago, the main lines of the great advance which has taken place become obvious. We are done, at all events, with chattel slavery. Most of the world is done with the larger slavery of despotic monarchy. We are so far liberated from the old tyranny of the priest that some among us, forgetting how unendurable the world found it, strangely want to hark back to it, as a refuge from the overwhelming burden of responsibility entailed upon an emancipated age. Thus mankind at large has won a considerable measure of mental and moral as well as physical "self-determination."

It is true that very few people are educated; the reason being that thus far we have developed on a large scale only one kind of education, whereas the varieties of human temperament and genius require many. Nevertheless, we do provide opportunities of getting an education for everybody who can use them, or who cares to.

We answer our question, then, upon the whole, in the affirmative. Men, by and large, are wiser and better than their fathers, by and large. The generalization remains sound even though the exceptions to it need to be counted by the thousand. We have much, indeed, to learn from the past. It has bequeathed to us a glorious inheritance of wisdom and beauty and heroism to assimilate, and to rival or surpass if we can. We cannot hope that the mass, either of our time or of any future generation, will ever be raised to the level of the mountain-peaks of individual genius and spiritual grandeur flung up by the volcanic energies of the human spirit in bygone days. But there is a slow, yet steady, raising of the common level.

What we behold assuredly affords no ground for ex-

cessive self-satisfaction, still less for intermission of upward effort. It is true, as Professor Robinson says, that we are burdened with the greatest task ever laid upon the shoulders of our race. But we have unprecedented resources with which to meet it; and although our human material seems inadequate enough, we have yet advanced so far, in so short a time, in the conquest of nature's magic powers that disbelief in further victories would be folly. There is thus no occasion for despair, but rather every reason for modest hope that faithful persistence on our part will enable us to bequeath to our successors a fairer and more hopeful world than men have ever yet beheld.

FINIS

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